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Meditations
ON THE LOVING WORDS OF

MEDITATIONS

ON

THE LOVING WORDS

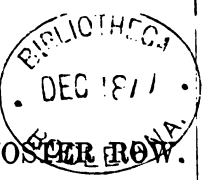
OF OUR

LOVING LORD AND SAVIOUR.

BY JAMES GRANT,

AUTHOR OF

"GOD IS LOVE," "OUR HEAVENLY HOME," "THE RELIGIOUS TENDENCIES OF THE TIMES," ETC.



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PREFACE.

THE subject of this small Volume is one of surpassing preciousness to every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no subject, indeed, in the wide range of Divine revelation which is sweeter to the taste of all the disciples of Jesus, than His own assurance of the tender affection which He ever cherisheth towards them. This was often given in His Loving Words as well as by every act of His life, and was at last sealed by His death on the Cross. With the view, and in the hope, that every believer in Jesus may find an inexhaustible source of profit and comfort in these "Meditations," I have chosen this subject. I trust that what I have written, so far as I have

been guided by the Holy Spirit, may help to lead my readers to follow in the same track. If so, they will be most thankful that a gracious Providence has directed their thoughts into this channel. The "Loving Words" of our Lord, if treasured up in the memory, will prove to them at all times, and under every class of circumstances, springs of spiritual blessing in the largest and best meaning of the phrase. Those Sayings of our Saviour which I have, in this connected form, sought to make the subject of my readers' "Meditations," as they have been of my own, will not fail, if the Divine Spirit be earnestly asked to open up their hidden meaning, and apply them to the mind and heart, to lead them to Christ Himself, by whom they were spoken, and through Him to God the Father.

And here let me ask the reader's special attention to what I have said, in the concluding Chapter of my little Work, on the mistaken views which prevail among many of the saints of God

with regard to the positions, if I may use the expression, which God the Father and Christ the Son, respectively occupy in relation to the origin and carrying out of the scheme of man's redemption. I speak advisedly when I say, that many of the holiest and best of God's people entertain views on this point, which are altogether unscriptural, and at once dishonouring to God the Father and the source of great discomfort to their own souls. I have shown in that part of my work—in which I have gone at some length into the subject—that they almost shrink from the contemplation of God the Father, as if He always wore a frowning face to them, while the face of Christ the Son, is ever radiant with smiles as He looks upon them. In other words, they flee from God to Christ. This is an entire reversal of the Scriptural order of things. That order of things is to regard Christ as what He describes Himself to be,—the way to God ; and the believer ought never to rest, until, through Jesus, he has found access, not only, as I have

remarked in the body of this work, to the Throne, but to the very Heart of God.

As I have reason to believe that these "Meditations" will, owing to the nature of the subject, be, in many cases, given away as presents from friends to friends, I have caused the little Volume to be done up by the binder in a style which may make it suitable for that purpose.

JAMES GRANT.

35, CORNWALL ROAD, W.
March 1st, 1877.

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MEDITATIONS

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CHAPTER FIRST.

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS.

I HAVE, for some time past, marvelled much that no believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has prepared a little work embodying, in a connected form, the "Loving Words" which He spake during His sojourn in our world. I have met with a work, published more than half a century ago, under the title of "The Pure Doctrines of Christianity; or, the Words of Our Saviour." But this work consists simply of an unclassified collection of *all* the Sayings of the Saviour when He was here on earth. What I regret is that, so far as my reading extends, no work, great or small, has ever been brought out, consisting *solely* of "Meditations on the Loving Words of our Loving Lord and

Saviour." It has often occurred to me that such a work, if prepared in a spirit of fervent affection for Christ, and written under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, could not fail, with the Divine blessing accompanying the perusal, to be productive of great comfort, mingled with much profit, to those who might peruse it in a humble and prayerful spirit.

In the absence, so far as I know, of any such work, it is my intention to transfer to these pages the more striking of the many "Loving Words of our Loving Lord and Saviour," spoken by Him when in this world,—accompanied with such "Meditations" on them as may, under, I trust, the unerring guidance of the Holy Ghost, occur to my mind.

It may be interesting to the reader here to mention, that the series of "Meditations," of which the present little volume consists, were principally written with a view to the author's own spiritual profit and consolation. It afterwards occurred to him, that if published in this form, they might minister to the consolation, and contribute to the present and eternal profit of at least some of the many who will peruse them as they are now presented to the public. The author's work, "God is Love; or, Glimpses of the Father's Infinite Affection for His People," published some years ago, has met with re-

markable success, having gone through *ten* editions in this country, and sold to the extent of between 30,000 and 40,000 copies in America, while numerous remarkable proofs of the signal good of which it has been productive, have been received by the author. That work has been out of print for some time, but will, I hope, be reprinted soon. It has occurred to me, that a work on the affection of Christ for His disciples, as exemplified in His "Loving Words," spoken when in this world, would be an appropriate companion to my work, "God is Love," and might be divinely blessed, at least in some proportion to the amount of good which attended the publication of the latter volume.

Every word which our Lord and Saviour spoke when He sojourned in this lower world, was of unspeakable importance, and ought to be affectionately remembered and well weighed; but while no utterance of His is to be overlooked, neglected, or forgotten, every Christian reader of the New Testament must have felt that those "Loving Words" which were specially spoken by His human lips, moved by His Divine loving heart, were the words which he has found most consoling to his own soul. It is so in relation to men. Any words spoken to us by our earthly friends, which are most replete with affection, are the words which we prize most of

all. They are the dearest of all language to us, and are treasured up in our memories with a fondness and delight exceeding the pleasure which any other words less full of love could minister to us.

There was nothing more prominent in the preaching of Christ, or in His conversation with His disciples, than His earnest inculcation of the obligations under which all those, who know the Scriptures, lie to love Him. Now, nothing can be better, or so well, adapted, to inspire love in the human heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, than the contemplation of those passages of Scripture in which, in His own words, we have declarations and promises of His love to us. The affections of millions of sinners, in every age of the world, since the death and resurrection of the Redeemer, have been won to Him by the revelations of Himself made to them by His own utterances. They have been led to love Him because they have seen, in His own language, the fervour of the affection which He felt for them from all eternity. And as multitudes, which no man can number, have been thus first drawn to Christ, so they have all felt that an increased acquaintance with Jesus made to them from His own words, have increased their love to their Lord. And as every believer in Christ earnestly desires and fervently longs to love his

Saviour more, a further perusal of His own words, and more frequent "Meditations' on them, cannot fail to increase his love to Him.

Some time ago we heard and read much about perfection in love to Christ being attainable in this life, but that great and deplorable delusion has well-nigh passed away. The most advanced Christian in the Divine life feels most deeply his short-comings in relation to the love which he ought ever to feel for His Lord and Saviour. Let me say then that there is no other way in which any believer can more increase the ardour of his affection for Christ, than by devoting much of his time to silent "Meditations" on the many "Loving Words" which fell from His lips, emanating from a heart full to overflowing with an affection of whose height, and depth, and breadth, and length, we can form no conception which would make even an approach to the reality. Nor, indeed, will that ever be. Even when countless ages in heaven of the coming eternity, shall have passed away, the greatness of Christ's love will not be fully grasped by its glorified inhabitants. As the angels, before the advent of Christ to our world, desired to look into the things which were connected with that event, so those redeemed by His blood, will continue through all eternity, to increase in the knowledge and love of their Lord, without ever being perfect in

the knowledge of the greatness of His love to them. But though no inexhaustible knowledge of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ to us, is attainable in this life, or will be in the life to come, the most advanced Christian in the knowledge of Christ, may even now make much greater progress in that knowledge. And, as will have been inferred from a remark which has already been made, there are no means more fitted to help the believer in Jesus on in his increased knowledge of the Saviour, than in frequent and thoughtful "Meditations" on those passages of New Testament Scripture in which Christ has spoken, whether of Himself or to others, or of both Himself and those whom He came from heaven to save.

I will just here repeat, for it cannot be too often repeated, that the more frequently the "Loving Words" of Jesus are perused, and the more devoutly they are pondered, the more will the reader feel his heart drawn out in its warmest affections for Him who loved and gave Himself for sinners; and correspondingly great will necessarily be the blessedness of this result in the experience of every believer whose mind has been so exercised. That such may be the happy experience of all who read the series of "Meditations on the Loving Words of our Loving Lord and Saviour," to which this chapter

is introductory,—is the earnest desire and fondly cherished hope of him from whose pen they proceed.

CHAPTER SECOND.

THE BEATITUDES OF CHRIST.

In my "Meditations on the Loving Words of our Loving Lord and Saviour," which He spake during His public ministry in this lower world, I will not consider them according to the chronological order in which they were uttered by Him, nor, indeed, according to any other definite system. I will be guided in my selection and consideration of those "Loving Words," by circumstances which may occur in the course of my preparation of the series of chapters of which the present forms the second.

But before adverting to the "Loving Words" which our "Loving Lord" spake Himself in relation to Himself during His sojourn in this world, it is right we should fix our thoughts for a few moments on the proofs which God the Father furnished of His love to Christ, at the time of His incarnation. The angel who announced to the shepherds who were watching over their flocks in Bethlehem when the event

took place, said, "I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people." The advent of Jesus could only prove to be good tidings of great joy to all people by His rescuing the world from the misery in which it was immersed, and saving it from the incomparably greater misery to which its sin had exposed it in the world to come. His name was called Jesus because He came to save His people from their sins.

There immediately followed, according to the evangelist, Luke, these other words, "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." Now as God Himself is "Love,"—that being both His name and His nature,—He could send no other being into the world for the world's redemption from its ruin, than One who possessed the same nature as Himself. It was, therefore, an inevitable necessity in the nature of things, that Christ should be a Saviour whose heart should burn with an intense love for those whom He came to save. It is an unspeakable joy for every true believer in Christ to be able to fall back on the testimony which God the Father in this way gave to His Son Jesus Christ, as being sent by Himself in our nature

into our world. No believer can doubt, after reading the demonstrations of delight on the part of God which accompanied the incarnation of Christ, that our Lord was the counterpart of God Himself in His loving character. To know, therefore, that God so loved Christ as to furnish the world with such a striking proof as that to which I have adverted, as being given by the "heavenly host" which he sent to herald the Saviour's birth,—is a fact which ought to, and must, fill the hearts of all believers in Christ with exceeding great joy. It is one which increases the importance that attaches to every word which Christ said in relation to Himself, as a loving Saviour during the period of His public ministry when in this world. It is one of the many parts of the Word of God which, the more frequently and fully believers in Christ meditate on it, opens up to their minds and hearts fresh fountains of spiritual joy and bliss. The circumstances under which God bore testimony to His pleasure at the advent of Christ to our world that He might redeem it from its sins, and from their consequences,—have been, and still will be while the world lasts, the source of inexpressible happiness to believers in Christ.

Before I come to speak of the "Loving Words" which the Lord Jesus Himself spake in

relation to Himself on so many occasions and in so many forms during His public ministry in our world, and after His resurrection from the dead,—it is right a reference should be made to the testimony which God Himself gave to the lovely and loving character of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, immediately after His baptism. "And Jesus," we are told, "when He was baptised, went up straightway out of the water, and the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him; and, lo, a voice from heaven was heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him." It will be seen that here we have a two-fold attestation on the part of God the Father of the love which He bore to His Son. The one was by a silent proof; the other by an audible voice. The former consisted of the opening of the heavens, and the latter the words spoken, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him."

Hitherto I have referred to the attestations, either by distinct declarations which God the Father has given of His love to His Son, or to the expression of the loving character of His Son which He gives inferentially to the same effect, in various parts of the New Testament. I now come to the proofs which Jesus Himself

has given of His loving character, by the "Loving Words" which He spake when on earth, out of the fulness of His loving heart.

First of all, then, I will begin with what our Lord and Saviour said in His Sermon on the Mount. The Mount, from the summit of which our Lord delivered this address to His disciples, is a small rising northward from the sea of Galilee, and near to Capernaum. Its height is only about seventy feet. Many suppose that it is the same Mount as that to which our Lord retired, and on which He spent the night in prayer, before His election and ordination of the twelve apostles. This was the opinion of Dr. Wells, who stood high, a century ago, as an authority on Biblical subjects. Because of the Beatitudes contained in this discourse which Christ delivered on this Mount, it is called by many, till this day, "The Mount of Beatitudes." The Beatitudes are nine in number, and all follow each other in succession. "The sermon," says Bishop Porteus, "explains, in some degree, the nature of our Lord's religion, the duties it enjoins, and the dispositions it requires. It contains a greater variety of new, important and excellent, moral precepts, than is anywhere to be found in the same compass." The word "Beatitudes," simply means a declaration of the happiness already possessed by those to

whom it can be truthfully applied in this life, at the same time including the happiness which is in reserve for all the people of God in the life which is to come.

The first Beatitude which Christ pronounced in this sermon, was on the *poor in spirit*, "Blessed," were His words, "are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Our Saviour, in pronouncing this Beatitude, manifestly delighted in the words which He spake. The same may be said in relation to all the remaining eight Beatitudes which He declared to be blessings enjoyed by those whom He addressed on the occasion. They were all "Loving Words" which came from the loving heart of Jesus. "Blessed,"—in other words, happy,—"are the poor in spirit." Richard Baxter's observation on this expression, explains its meaning as fully as if he had written a treatise upon it. He says, "Though poor in the world, rich if you have spirits suited to your poverty." Yapp, that quaint but racy old evangelical divine, also explains the meaning of our Lord when He pronounces a Beatitude on the poor in spirit. It means, he says, "beggars in spirit, such as have nothing at all to support them; those that find out the best in God." As regards my own opinion of the phrase of poverty of spirit, as here employed by Christ,

I consider it synonymous with that humility of mind which leads the saints of God to view themselves such great sinners in His sight, as to feel that the very lowest place in which any-one can be placed, is the only place which it becomes them to take. They feel that they ought ever to be lying in dust and ashes. Probably there is no better exemplification in the Word of God of the poverty of spirit to which our Lord refers in His sermon on the Mount, than the words of Paul when he said: "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given." In these words there is that remarkable mingling of poverty of spirit and joy in God, which ought to be, and is, the experience of all the disciples of Christ. To the world it may seem a contradiction, that deep humility, or poverty of spirit, and blessedness, should be blended together; and yet there is no believer in Christ in whom these conditions of mind and heart are to be found in union, who cannot, speaking from experience, set his seal to the truth of the words of Christ when he said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The poverty of spirit, in other words, the deep humility of soul with which the phrase of our Lord is interchangeable, is but another mode of expressing the commencement here below of the heaven

above, now in course of preparation for them by the Redeemer at God's right hand. There was no idea by which my revered pastor, the late Rev. James Harington Evans, of John-street Chapel, Bedford-row, more frequently delighted to express, than that there was no source of happiness more abundant or more abiding than that of a deep contrite spirit which was with him the same in substance as the terms holiness, or humility, or poverty of spirit. Nor is there, in the Letters of Samuel Rutherford, a sentiment which is oftener to be met with than that of the believer's habitual happiness being proportioned to his humility, caused by a sense of his sinfulness in the sight of God,—and in his own sight, too.

Some difference of opinion has subsisted among Commentators on the Bible, as to whether the expression, "kingdom of heaven," is here intended by our Lord to mean the kingdom of heaven in this world, or the kingdom of heaven in the world to come. My own opinion of the meaning of our Lord is, that the expression, as He here used it, included the happiness of the people of God in both worlds,—in the world that now is, and in that which is to come. This view, which I had formed before I had consulted any of our best known Biblical critics, I have since found to be the beliefs of,

perhaps, a majority of our most approved Scripture interpreters. Thomas Scott, in his Comment on the words, gives it, according to my view of the sense in which our Lord meant His words, when He made use of the expression under consideration. Those to whom the words apply, says Scott, "are happy in the earnest hope of heaven, and their humble and lowly frame of mind tends to a peaceful enjoyment of life, of confidence in God, communion with Him, and the partaking of His Holy Spirit."

The words of our Lord in this portion of Scripture are in complete accordance with those put into the mouth of God Himself, by the prophet Isaiah, where God is made to speak in His own name, in these words :—"To this man will I look, even to him that is of a poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembleth at My word." Happy of necessity must that man be to whom God thus looks in His tender love and compassion. Poverty of spirit is an essential element of happiness in this life. It is so in the experience of the angels of heaven; for while we know that they are inconceivably exalted they are confessedly humble; which is but another phrase for poverty of spirit; for they, we are told, continually veil their faces with their wings, and incessantly cry out, "Holy,

holy, Lord God of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory." There is not a saint at this moment on earth who will not bear testimony from his own experience, to the fact, that just in proportion to the measure of his poverty of spirit, is his happiness in passing through a world which is a vale of tears to all others, who are strangers to that state of mind and heart.

The second Beatitude is contained in the fourth verse of the same chapter of Matthew's Gospel. "Blessed!" says our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, "are those that *Mourn*, for they shall be comforted." Who, it has been sometimes asked, does not mourn? The world is a scene of sorrows. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards." The first indication of life which the new-born infant gives, is in the shape of pain by its crying; and from the cradle to the grave there are millions of the human race who have one continuous series of sorrows. But the saints of God have sorrows which the world knows not of. Their greatest sorrows spring from sources to which the men of the world are perfect strangers. They mourn with a depth of sorrow of which none but themselves can form any conception, on account of their sins. Though the sins of believers in Christ are not in general so great as those which prompted David to pen the fifty-first

Psalm, all believers are conscious of committing many sins which constrain them to feel the load of their guilt too heavy to be borne. They feel and confess themselves to be heartbroken by reason of the number and enormity of their transgressions. But the Beatitude in question is not confined to mourning for sin. It includes all sorrow and sufferings of any kind, which the disciples of Christ may be called on to endure. To all such Christ promises comfort. They are comforted by assurances of Divine support in all their seasons of sorrow, and the bright and blessed hope of happiness hereafter in heaven, should God not be pleased to deliver them in this life from the causes of their mourning. "The words," says Dr. Jortin, "often admit of a sufficiently wide meaning, as that they may be made to read thus :—'Blessed are they who endure afflictions of any kind, with a humble submission to Divine Providence, but still more blessed, if the sorrows and hardships which they undergo are for the sake of duty and religion. God will certainly support them under their distress, and hereafter they shall rest in those mansions where no sorrow enters.' "

This, surely, is comfort to mourners in Zion, which ought to dry up the tears of all true believers in Him who spake the words on which

we have been "Meditating,"—"Blessed are they that Mourn, for they shall be comforted," —words of our Loving Lord and Saviour which are in harmony with those of the Psalmist, when he said, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Let every sorrowing believer in Christ take comfort from the assurance, that in God's time and way, his sorrow shall be turned into joy. The days of his mourning will soon, at the longest, be ended, and he enter into the joy of his Lord,—joy which will be perfect, unchangeable, and eternal in heaven. There may be many who are passing through their deep waters while they are reading these words. May every such reader abundantly taste their sweetness and experience their power!

CHAPTER THIRD.

THE BEATITUDES OF CHRIST.

(Continued).

THE third virtue which our Lord, in his Serm on the Mount, declared to be one of the sour of happiness enjoyed by the saints of God, v expressed in these words:—"Blessed are t *Meek*; for they shall inherit the earth." T word "meek," as here employed, is synon mous with the words "poor in spirit," "humility." There is not a Christian in t world who is of a meek and quiet spirit, w will not bear his testimony, from his own e perience, to the happiness which is invaria associated with real meekness of mind. was, too, one of the virtues which the apost dwelt on with special earnestness, both in th preaching and writings. "The fruit of Spirit," Paul tells us, "is love, joy, pea long-suffering, gentleness, meekness." It a remarkable fact that almost all the gra here enumerated in Paul's Epistle to the Ga

tians, are embodied in the one word, "meekness." Peter speaks of "meekness" as being an ornament, and requires those to whom his epistles were addressed to give an answer to those who asked them for a reason of the hope that was in them, "with meekness and fear." And no Christian can fail to be struck with the fact, that when our Lord pronounced all those to be "blessed," who possessed and exemplified the virtue of "meekness," He only commended in His disciples that which he practised Himself. There was no virtue which shone more conspicuously in the Saviour's character, than that of "meekness." Isaiah predicted of Christ, what the event turned out to be:—"He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; he was brought as a Lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not His mouth." He sat at meat with publicans and sinners, and "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man, and being found in fashion as a man, He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." And not only is this said of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, but He holds Himself up as, in this respect, an example to all His followers. In one place He says to His apostles, "I am

among you as one that serveth," and in another, speaking to His disciples generally, He said, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart." Whatever precept Christ gave, or whatever example He set to His disciples, must needs be conducive to human happiness; and just in proportion as believers in Jesus obey His commandments, and seek to imitate His example in relation to the virtue of "meekness," or humility, will be their "blessedness" in this life, as well as in that which is to come. "They will," as Bishop Porteus writes, "inherit the earth in the sense of enjoying the greatest blessedness on the earth,—daily enjoying composedness of spirit, peace, and comfort of mind." Augustine's remark, in relation to his own views of himself, is one that well deserves the careful and constant consideration of us all. "The sufficiency of my merit is to know that my merit is not sufficient." There is not a Christian who has carefully studied the experience of his own heart, who will not bear his testimony to the fact, that there is no state of mind which, in point of happiness, can at all be compared with that of a meek and quiet spirit. "Blessed, indeed, are the meek." They do inherit the earth, to say nothing of the happiness of which every saint is in sure and certain hope, when he has done with this world, for he

will then possess and enjoy an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for him.

The next declaration of happiness and one of its causes, made by our Saviour in His Sermon on the Mount, is contained in the fourth of the nine Beatitudes of which the series consists, and is in the sixth verse. "Blessed," says our Lord, "are they which do *hunger and thirst after righteousness*; *for they shall be filled.*" There are different opinions amongst some of our most distinguished expositors as to the meaning of the word "righteousness," as here employed by the Saviour. Trapp, of whose interpretations of Scripture I have, as I have before said, a high opinion, expounds the meaning of the word in the following terms:—"It is the righteousness of Christ, both imputed and imparted, that is in Christ for us, being wrought by His own value and merit, and is called the righteousness of justification; this is in us from Christ, being wrought by His virtue and spirit, and is called the righteousness of sanctification." Guise concurs with the view of Trapp. Taken as a whole, I regard Guise as one of the soundest in his interpretations of Scripture, among our commentators. But I consider him, as well as Trapp, to have had a mistaken opinion of the passage referred to. It is to be remembered that our Lord's Sermon

on the Mount was delivered at a comparatively early period of His public ministry; and at this time, and, indeed, for a long time after, even His Apostles had most imperfect notions with regard to the nature of the religion which He came to the world to establish. The disciples whom He here addresses, had not the slightest idea of salvation through the imputed righteousness of Christ, wrought out on the cross; for at this early period of their Lord's public ministry, they had heard nothing of His dying on the cross to atone for human guilt, and thereby bring in an everlasting righteousness which should be unto all and upon all them that should believe in His name. His own righteousness, therefore, as the suffering and prospectively dying Saviour could not have here been the righteousness to which He referred. His disciples at this period of His public ministry, had no idea either of Christ's atoning death or of His resurrection, and without both these events there could have been no such thing as the righteousness of Christ at all. In relation to Dr. Whitby's views on evangelical doctrines, I have, generally, no faith in them, for he commenced his theological career as an ultra-Arminian, and died a Socinian: but as regards throwing light on certain parts of New Testament Scripture in relation to which differences of opinions exist,— there is no commentator amongst the

many commentators whose works form part of my library, whose views are more in accordance with my own. On this one of our Saviour's Beatitudes, Dr. Whitby expresses himself thus—and I concur with him:—"Justifying righteousness is not here intended. The word righteousness bears no such sense in the Gospels, but only in the Epistles of St. Paul. The Jews whom Christ addressed had no idea of this righteousness,—that they should be justified by Christ's death."

But while, for the reasons I have given, the declaration made by our Lord, in His sermon on the Mount, of the blessedness of those whom He addressed, had no connection with His atoning sacrifice for our sins on the Cross, inasmuch as He had not, at the time, suffered and died on the cross,—His death and resurrection from the dead, ever since, are the only facts which constitute the "righteousness" which, in God's sight, avails for the sinner's justification and salvation; and, therefore, when anyone is now to be regarded as "blessed" because he hungers and thirsts after "righteousness," it is because he does so from the imputation of Christ's righteousness to him, just as his sins are imputed to the Saviour.

The words "hunger and thirst," which Christ used in the verse in question, simply denote that he who is the subject of them is actuated by as earnest a desire for righteousness in the sight of

God, as one all but dying of hunger is for food, or is suffering the most intense thirst for water. In various parts of the Psalms we see the same idea unfolded. To mention only one. Speaking of his own experience, David says :—"O God, Thou art my God, early will I seek thee; my soul longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is." Love to God, obedience to His laws, conformity to His image, and delight in communion with Him, were the principal elements of "righteousness" under the Old Testament dispensation; and it was this "righteousness" which our Lord had in His mind when He pronounced those to be blessed who were righteous in this sense.

The Saviour appended the words, "For he shall be filled." That part of Christ's sermon is, more or less sensibly, realised in this world, in the experience of every real Christian; and it will be so in its fullest measure in heaven. In this life many of God's saints have such abundant manifestations of grace and glory made to them, as have almost made them believe that they were already in the realms of celestial bliss; but these are the experiences of comparatively few, even of the holiest men that ever lived. But the majority of believers in Christ are filled, to so great an extent, with the blessedness declared by our Lord to be theirs, that they have often longed to be in

the actual possession of those mansions in heaven, which their Saviour is now engaged in preparing for them.

The fifth Beatitude in our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, is contained in the seventh verse of the chapter in which Matthew records all Christ's Beatitudes." "Blessed," says Jesus, "*are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*" There is not a merciful or kind man in the world—for the terms are essentially interchangeable—who has not, in his own experience, realised the truth of our Lord's declaration, that he who is merciful or kind to others, is, just in proportion to the extent in which he is so, a blessed or happy man. A merciful or kind disposition, embodied in one's daily and hourly life, is a perpetual source of bliss, however many and great may be the other sources of discomfort in our journey through this vale of tears. On the other hand, those who have no compassion for their fellow-creatures in their sufferings, who, in other words, are hard-hearted, are of all men the most miserable. I feel confident that no one who has read the parable of our Lord in relation to the man that fell among the thieves, can fail to have come to the conclusion, that the Good Samaritan who commiserated the condition of the man from Jericho, and imparted the needful aid to him, was incomparably more happy than the Priest and Levite who passed by

on the other side, without even having compassion on the illtreated man. If he who is unsympathetic with hunger, suffering, and sorrow, only knew the blessedness of mercy, he would be merciful from the very selfishness of his nature. Those who have no mercy for others would have no ground to expect mercy from God, were it not that God's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways. One may well wonder that those whose consciences bear witness to the fact that they have no bowels of compassion towards others; in other words, are utterly devoid of mercy towards their fellow-creatures, —can join in singing those words of one of our best known, and most admired hymns, which say—

> "That mercy we to others show.
> We pray the like from Heaven."

If we do not show mercy to others we cannot pray for "the like from heaven." Forgiveness of any one's sins is an act of mercy, and no one therefore, is consistent or truthful who does not show mercy in using that part of our Lord's Prayer which says :—"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."

I will only make this further observation,—that in my view of the words in question, of our Lord, they include mercy or kindness to the brute creation, as well as to our fellow men.

CHAPTER FOURTH.

THE BEATITUDES OF CHRIST

(Concluded).

THE Virtue of being "*Pure in heart,*" is the next with which our Lord associates the enjoyment of happiness. To purity in heart God everywhere in His Word annexes happiness in this world, as well as in that which is to come. Where the heart is not pure it cannot be right with God. Without purity of heart there can be no acceptable service to Him. Cleanse me from all impurity, was the prayer of all the most eminent saints of God in Old Testament times. "Create in me a clean," or pure "heart, and renew a right spirit within me," was not only the prayer of David, but—though not always in the same words—of those holy men of whom we read in the Scriptures before the advent of Christ. God is called the Searcher of hearts and tryer of the reins of the children of men. Unless our hearts be right with God, we can, I repeat, render Him no acceptable

service. It is on the state of the heart in the sight of God, that the worth of one's services to Him entirely depends. How very important, then, that each of us who profess to be believers in Christ should examine ourselves as to this condition of our hearts in the sight of God. "God," says Richard Baxter, "will not bless impure, unholy, souls with the light of His countenance, and the comfort of His love, but hearts purified by grace from the filth of fleshly lusts and love of sin, are fitted for benign communion here, and heavenly glory hereafter." In other words, they shall, by the eye of faith, see God here, and by the eye of sense hereafter in heaven. Blessed, therefore, are all in this life, who are pure in heart, for they shall see God here below, though only as through a glass darkly, but they will see Him through all eternity in heaven in all the fulness of the resplendent vision which will be one of those glorious conditions which will be peculiar to that bright and blessed place. None but the people of God can have any idea of the blessedness of seeing God by faith, even in our present state of being, but what it will be to see the King in His beauty, in all the surpassing splendour of the heavenly state, no mind can form any conception.

The *Peacemakers* are the next class of Chris-

tians whom our Lord declares to be blessed. And even apart from the declarations of Christ, every one who sustains that character can speak from his own experience, and say, that to allay strife and extinguish unkind feelings in the hearts of men, is a characteristic of the human mind which is universally productive of happiness, just as the opposite characteristic never fails to prove the source of great unhappiness. God is the God of Peace, and Christ is the Prince of Peace. Jesus was sent by God into the world to promote peace on earth and good-will toward men. The Gospel of Christ is described as the Gospel of peace. And every Christian ought to be a messenger of peace, whenever, in the sphere in which Providence has placed him, he may have an opportunity of healing breaches in the human family. And it is a source of sorrow to all the disciples of Christ, that there should be so many occasions for this in one's journey through this world. Sin has sown so much dissension, and created so much enmity between man and man, that one can hardly take a single step in the pathway of life, without the services of the Peacemaker being called into requisition. And there can be few more certain sources of happiness than the consciousness of having brought about feelings of friendship and love, where before

there existed the reverse. There is no class of Christians who stand higher than Peacemakers in the estimation of God; for Jesus says, in the Beatitude under consideration, that the peacemakers shall be called the children of God. God could call them by no more ennobling or more endearing name than that of His own children. What Christian, then, would not covet the appellation, and ensure its possession, by striving to fulfil the functions of a peacemaker?

Those who suffer *Persecution for Righteousness sake,* are the next class of Christians whom the Saviour pronounces blessed. "Blessed," are His words, "are they who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Persecution of those who had led holy lives under the Old Testament dispensation had always been a characteristic of their life. And it has been so, and ever will be in a more marked manner under the Christian dispensation. Christ, when on earth, often emphatically warned his followers to be prepared for severe persecution, even unto their death. It is a rare thing in our day, to have to suffer death for our discipleship to Christ; but every real believer in Jesus has to suffer for his Lord in various ways,—often in forms of persecution unknown to any but God and himself. The form of per-

secution is not confined to mere bodily suffering. The most difficult of all kinds of persecution to bear, are often those of a mental nature. In addition to the mere fact of persecution for Christ's sake, His own words are true in a sense which is not usually attached to them. "A man's greatest foes are those of his own household." Those believers in Christ whose lot it is to live with near unconverted relations, can often bear testimony to the fact, that there is such a thing as a living martyrdom, and that there is no living martyrdom which many Christians are called to bear, equal to that which is endured from those relations, the nearest to them by family ties, who are not the subjects of God's saving grace. It may be that many a reader of this part of my observations can give, from his or her individual experience, a full attestation to this truth. To all such I would say, "Be of good comfort." This kind of persecution,—and the same may be said of all forms of persecution,—will come to an end at, if not before, either the death of the persecutors or the persecuted. Death, indeed, will be the end of all persecutions, because the end of all the persecutors; while the persecuted will find in the kingdom of heaven—*in* heaven,—an ample reward for all the persecutions which he or she may have had to endure in this world.

Bishop Blockall says, in relation to those who, in these days, are the subjects of persecution for their religion: "Those shall be blessed who, notwithstanding the persecution they sustain, continue firm and constant and steadfastly perfect in their true Christian faith, and living in a spirit of piety and virtue." Dr. Samuel Clarke, in relation to the phrase—"For theirs is the kingdom of heaven," expounds the words thus:—"For they having given the greatest possible proof of their sincerity and constancy will receive an extraordinary crown and a peculiar place reserved in heaven."

The ninth and last of the Beatitudes contained in the Saviour's Sermon on the Mount, may be regarded in part, as a continuation of the one which preceded it. "*Blessed,*" said our Lord, "*are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake.*" This is but another form of persecution of those who are faithful disciples of Christ. And there are few more severe forms of persecution which Christians are called to bear. It is, indeed, a severe trial to be deliberately and grossly misrepresented and reviled when one's conscience acquits him entirely of the justice of that wherewith he is charged. The best and holiest of men have found this kind of trial

to be the most difficult of all to bear. Paul felt it one of his heaviest burdens, and myriads of God's saints in all the intervening ages have not only groaned, but died broken-hearted under the groundless charges which have been made against them. The very fact of their entire innocence of the evil of which they have been accused, has only deepened the pain which the charge has produced. I could say nothing for the comfort of those who are the subjects of this kind of persecution, at all to be compared with the words of our Lord Himself. "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad," says the Saviour, "for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." In other words, no new thing has happened to the persecuted followers of the Lord Jesus Christ in the present day. "All who will live godly must suffer persecution;" for so it has always been, and so it always will be. Indeed, it may be in a sense said, that anyone who does not suffer persecution some time or other, for his religion, has reason to doubt whether his religion is the right religion at all.

I have thus called attention to each of the Beatitudes indicated in our Lord's Sermon on the the Mount. The more a believer in Christ meditates on them, the more he will find in them an

inexhaustible source of blessedness. He will find them increasingly sweet to his taste. They will, indeed, prove the "Loving Words" of his "Loving Lord and Saviour."

Though every Christian is conscious that he falls far short of possessing those virtues in their various perfection which Jesus enumerates, and declares to be the source of such abundant blessedness as His words imply, yet it is his joy to know that his possession, in a certain measure, of those dispositions of the mind, and those affections of the heart, to which our Lord annexes blessings here and hereafter, will here, in a measure, and hereafter, in all their fulness and in their eternal perpetuity, be enjoyed in the kingdom of heaven.

CHAPTER FIFTH.

CHRIST'S OWN ACCOUNT OF HIS MISSION UNTO THE WORLD.

In the course of His public ministry our Lord very often, in different ways, in addition to unfolding His loving heart, declared His divinity in terms so explicit, and so emphatic, that no one who heard them could fail to misunderstand Him. Not only His disciples, but even those who denied Him to be the Son of God, and rejected Him as such, acknowledged that He claimed to be the Son of God, or a Divine messenger sent from heaven. On one memorable occasion, in the earlier part of the Saviour's public ministry, He asserted the divinity of His nature and mission by appropriating it to Himself, when reading the Scriptures in one of the Jewish synagogues. The part, we are told, which He read, is contained in the book of Isaiah, where, in the sixty-first chapter, it is said :—"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach

good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." This could only be said by a Divine Person. The words are all words of affection, and show what a loving mission that was which our Lord came into our world to fulfil. And every word which He spoke, and every act He performed, till the day of His death, showed how faithfully and lovingly He fulfilled that glorious and gracious mission,—even the mission of opening up a way by His life and death blended together, whereby the salvation of every sinner who should believe on Him till the sound of the last trumpet may be secured.

It is interesting to know the circumstances under which our Saviour came to read in the synagogue the portion of Isaiah's writings which I have cited. Dean Prideaux throws light on the point. "A part of the synagogue service," says that learned theologian, "was the expounding of the Scriptures, and preaching them to the people. The first was performed at the time when they were read, and the other, when the reading of the Law and the Prophets was concluded. On this occasion Christ was called out as a member of the Synagogue of Nazareth, His own city, to read the section or lesson

out of the Prophets appointed for that day. And when He had stood up and read it, He sat down and expounded it, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." It would appear from this, that while reading the Scriptures in the Jewish form of service, Jesus stood, and sat down when about to expound it. On this occasion, He did, in conformity with, as Dr. Whitby tells us, what was the practice of Jewish doctors when they taught. Christ also, it will be remembered, sat down when He commenced preaching His sermon on the Mount.

No one can read the above words of Isaiah as cited and made His own, by our Lord, without, if he is a true disciple of His, being deeply touched by them. They express most emphatically the tender-heartedness of Him by whom they were spoken. Each sentence more fully unfolds the loving heart of our Lord than another. He mentions as the first part of His mission to our world, that of preaching the Gospel to the *poor*. This is a word which embraces the great majority of the human race; for, compared with the rich, in the worldly sense of the word, the poor constitute a large majority of our race. And the poor, because of the very fact of the misery caused by their poverty, all the more need the comforts which the Gospel of Christ brings to all those who em-

brace it savingly, and seek to regulate their lives and conversation by its blessed precepts. It is an abounding source of comfort to the poor Christian that his Lord and Saviour, when on earth, was brought up, as he has been, in the depths of poverty. He was born in a stable, and wrapped in swaddling-clothes at His birth. During His public ministry He was, at times, without a penny in His possession, and had not where to lay His head. Nor was it in this sense only that our Redeemer was in similar circumstances, in respect to the condition of the poor of the present day. He especially manifested His tender love to the poor by associating with them in all the relations and offices of life. His Gospel was especially preached to the poor, and by the poor of His day the Gospel was embraced, believed in, and confessed, by an incomparably greater majority of mankind in His time, than by the rich. And the same is the case still. It is as true now as it was in the days of Christ's sojourn in our world, that the poor have the Gospel successfully preached to them, and that it is the poor, especially, who are rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.

But though preaching the Gospel to the poor was one of the principal purposes for which Christ came into the world, there were others which attest the loving heart of our Lord and

Saviour. His own words are, "He (God) hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted." The world knows not how many broken hearts there are in it at the present time. The number is known to God alone; but it is very great. Could we but know the circumstances thoroughly, of every individual in every family in the land, I fear it would be found that very few families could claim exemption from one or more broken hearts among them. Many broken-hearted ones are to be met with in many families in which their broken hearts are unknown to father, mother, brother, or sister, or some one else sustaining the closest natural ties to them. But if the sorrows of such are unknown not only to the world, but to those who sustain the closest natural relations to them, they have, as disciples of Christ, joys of which no one but themselves knows anything. Even where whole families are sunk in the depths of poverty, as many of their number as have had the Gospel effectually preached unto them, are the possessors of spiritual riches, and of a happiness, in the midst of all their diversified sorrows, to which such as are of the world,—in other words, have not embraced the Gospel and believed in Christ,—are entire strangers. The Gospel of Christ has healed in a great measure, if not entirely, their broken hearts. That glorious Gospel is, every hour of the day, healing the

broken-hearted in great numbers wherever it is faithfully and affectionately preached. How delightful the conviction resting on a solid foundation, that the Gospel of Christ will yet be so preached in all nations of the earth, and the broken-hearted in every part of the world be healed by the Great Physician of souls! There are various causes which lead to broken hearts. Family and other griefs have often broken men's hearts; and no one can doubt that the healing of broken hearts was one of the chief objects of Christ's mission to our world. He refers to this in His appropriation of the language of the Prophet Isaiah to Himself. But my own impression is, that in the language in question, He had especially in His mind those who are broken-hearted on account of sin. Bishop Horsley's opinion, I find, accords with mine. "The broken-hearted," says that eminent divine, "are sinners not hardened in their sins, but desponding under a sense of their guilt, without hope of expiation. These broken hearts the Redeemer healed by making atonement for them, and by declaring the means and terms of salvation."

To preach "deliverance to the captive" was another great design of our Lord's public ministry. So were the recovery of sight to the blind, and "setting at liberty those that were bound." All these acts of mercy, with many

others, were daily done by our Lord in the days of His public ministry. They were done openly and everywhere, and all men were cognizant of the fact. Our Lord, therefore, appealed to them whether it was not so. They were compelled to confess that His "Loving Words" were confirmed by His loving actions. As He Himself said, they admitted the fact of the "Loving Words" He had spoken, and the loving actions He had done, but by a strange perversion of mind, ascribed them to the agency of the Evil One!

In the history of our Lord we are furnished, from the beginning to the end of his public ministry, with both verbal and practical illustrations of the words of Isaiah which I have cited, and which were applied to Christ by Himself, when he read the language in question from the Evangelical Prophet of the Old Testament. In the thirty-fifth verse of the ninth chapter of Matthew, we read as follows: "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease among the people." Then follow the words:—"But when He saw the multitudes He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." Dr. Adam Clarke, in relation to the "com-

passion" of our Lord as felt in this particular case, cites the language, on the point, of Mintert, a learned Biblical critic, who says:—"It is to be moved with pity from the very inmost bowels. It is an emphatic word, signifying a vehement affection of commiseration, by which the bowels, and especially the heart, is moved." But no language which man could employ could convey an adequate idea of the ardour of our Lord's affection for His disciples. It is infinite, and never will be fully comprehended, not even in eternity, notwithstanding all the light and knowledge and unceasing intercourse with Christ Himself, which there will be in heaven.

With regard to the words here used, "They (the disciples) fainted," nearly all of our most learned Commentators on the New Testament concur in the opinion, that they are not to be understood as implying that "the multitude" fainted, or fell down in the sense in which fainting is generally understood amongst us. The interpreters of Scripture of highest authority, and the most learned of the Fathers of the first three centuries, are of opinion that the translation should have been "grieved" or "melancholy." In the margin of our New Testaments, the words are rendered, "They were tired and lay down." Dr. Gill's interpretation of the passage is, "Being fatigued through grief and

tried, not in their bodies, through journeying from place to place, to hear the Word, but in their minds, being burdened and wearied with the various traditions and doctrines of the Scribes and Pharisees." My own opinion of the rendering of the passage in question has always been substantially the same as that of Dr. Gill, though I would express it in somewhat different language. I would say it was not on account alone of bodily exhaustion, nor even chiefly, that Jesus felt compassion,—which is here but another name for affection,—on the multitude who on this occasion followed Him. The principal cause of His affection was that "they were as sheep having no shepherd." In other words, it was their spiritual condition much more than their temporal circumstances, that so powerfully moved His loving heart. The words which immediately succeeded from His divine lips must have at once convinced His disciples of this. "Then," it is added, "said He unto His disciples, the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth labourers into the harvest." No one could understand these words of our Saviour in any other sense than as referring to the fewness of the preachers of the Gospel in His day, compared with the teeming population of a world lying in wickedness.

What follows I regard as of great importance: "Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into the harvest." Commentators, almost without exception, interpret the words, "Lord of the harvest," as applicable to God the Father alone. The only exception with which I am acquainted, in their works, is in the commentary, on the New Testament, of Dr. Doddridge. He supposes that the words are to be understood as meaning either the Father or the Son. My belief is that they were meant by our Lord when he employed them as very especially, if not exclusively, to be understood of Himself. And this, I think, is made most clear in the beginning of the next chapter of the same Gospel of Matthew. "And when," we are there told, "Jesus had called unto Himself His twelve disciples, He gave them power against unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease." No one can read to the end of this ninth chapter of the Gospel by Matthew, and the beginning of the tenth, without perceiving the connection between them. In the brief interval,—we know not how long a time may have elapsed between the close of the one chapter and the commencement of the other,—the natural assumption is, that the disciples of Christ had, in obedience to His com-

mand, prayed the "Lord of the Harvest" to send forth, or "thrust" forth more labourers,—as most commentators render the words of our Lord. And as the sending them forth was Christ's own act, in answer to the prayers of His disciples, I attach the greatest possible importance to this construction of the passage in question. It constitutes, in my judgment—though I have never met with any writer who has taken the same view of it as myself—an unanswerable though indirect proof of the Divinity of our Lord and Master. If our Lord instructed, or rather commanded His disciples to pray to Him that He might send, or thrust forth more labourers into the great harvest of the world, and if their prayer was immediately answered by the sending forth of Christ's twelve Apostles to preach the Gospel everywhere to sinners,—then He must be God in the most enlarged acceptation of the term; for none but God can hear and answer prayer. And none but God could empower mere men, the creatures of His hands, to perform all manner of miraculous cures.

I have frequently much regretted that in grounding chiefly the defence of Christian Missions to the heathen, on the commission given by Christ to His disciples, as His last commandment to them, to go into all the world and

preach the Gospel to every creature,—the commission to which I have been calling attention, should so often be altogether overlooked. The one commission as explicitly and as plainly involves the obligations laid on Christians to seek to spread the Gospel of Christ throughout the world, as the other. It is true, the first commission was not so emphatic as the second. The preaching of the Gospel by the Apostles was to be limited to the Jews, but that was only to be in the first instance. Though the preaching of the Gospel was to be, in the beginning, at Jerusalem, it was not to end there, nor be confined to the Jews. Nor did it end where it began. For before the last of the Apostles had closed his course in death, Christianity had spread through a large part of the world. This loving commission, therefore, of the "Loving Lord and Saviour," ought not to be overlooked, any more than the other, in enunciating and enforcing the obligations under which every believer in Christ is laid, no less, to send the Gospel to every portion of the habitable world. The marvel is that when we have both the example and command of our Lord in relation to our preaching His religion wherever we can, so many Christians fall short of their duty in this respect. I was much struck a few weeks ago in reading

in that valuable work the "Biblical Museum," the feeling expressed by a missionary while contemplating the vast number of unsaved sinners, and the fact that no Gospel was preached to them. He said, "As no fewer than 500,000,000 are represented as being unenlightened, I cannot, if I would, give up the idea of being a missionary, while I reflect on this vast number of my fellow sinners, who are perishing for lack of knowledge. Five hundred millions! intrudes itself on my mind, wherever I am, and however I am employed. When I go to bed it is the last thing that recurs to my memory. When I awake in the night, it is to meditate on it alone, and in the morning it is generally the first thing that occupies my thoughts."

Alas, there are among the best of God's saints few who could adopt this language, even in a much more modified form.

CHAPTER SIXTH.

THE LOVING SAYINGS ON TRUST IN GOD.

THE happiness in this life of those disciples to whom our Lord when on earth so often gave His counsels, occupied much of His solicitude. He especially dwelt on the blessedness of implicit *trust in the Providence of God;* but on no occasion did He exhort them at greater length, or with greater earnestness, to cast all their cares on God, than in the Sermon on the Mount. Addressing His assembled disciples on the occasion of delivering that Sermon, the Saviour says :—"Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body more than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air : for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than

they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto His stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you?"

These are, indeed, most "Loving Words of our Loving Lord and Saviour." I wish I could persuade my readers to ponder them, and pray over them, and seek to enter, as far as may be, into the spirit of Him who uttered them, when they proceeded from His lips as moved by His loving heart. Even the best of God's people know from painful experience, how great the unhappiness often is, which is caused by undue anxieties about the future, and by taking an unnecessarily gloomy view of

the present. One almost wonders that any believer in Christ could be so cast down by reason of the way, if there were no other words in the Bible to sustain and comfort him than those precious assurances given to the saints of God in the eighth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans, where he says :—"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." Whatever fears or anxieties in relation to future events may trouble the mind of the believer in Christ, those events will sooner or later be found among the all things included in the words of the Apostle, taught by the Holy Spirit, and therefore ought to prove an unfailing source of comfort to his mind.

No doubt the disciples were, when Christ spoke the above words, filled with a special anxiety as to the future of their life on earth. Undue anxiety is felt, in relation to the future, even by the best of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ at the present day ; and, on mature reflection, they often feel it to be sinful. All distrust of God as the God of providence, no less than as the God of grace, is so. We have our Saviour's own word for it, that God will not withhold from His people any-

thing that is good for them; but that all things shall work together for their good. Yet, notwithstanding this assurance to His saints, how often do they come to the conclusion, under the pressure of adverse dealings with them in Providence, that all things are against them, and that God has forgotten to be gracious? In this belief His people greatly dishonour God, and bring on themselves a measure of misery which He not only never intended, but which is most displeasing to Him. To be doubtful of the future in relation to God's providential dealings with His saints, is, in effect, to arraign either the wisdom or goodness of God, or both His wisdom and His goodness, and to bring on themselves a degree of unhappiness entirely at variance with the gracious purposes of God; for such a state of mind as that to which I allude, is altogether at variance with His gracious purpose,—that all His saints should be happy in this world as well as in the world to come. Implicit and constant trust in God in relation to all the incidents of life, would make His people happy amidst all the varied and ever varying events of life. The motto, "God does and will do all things well," were it made the prevailing subject of one's thoughts, whatever may be the vicissitudes of their life, would prove a perpetual source of happiness in this life. Oh, how

many Christians pass through the world habitually assailed by doubts and fears as to what their future course will be, while it is ultimately found that their doubts had no foundation, and their fears turned out to have been groundless. Most touching has always appeared to me the manner in which Bishop Hall, in his "Occasional Meditations," administers a word of rebuke to those who are the subjects of distrust in the Providence of God. "Look," says that spiritually-minded, loving-hearted man, "Look on the robin-red-breast,—pretty bird!—how cheerfully doth he sit and sing on the chamber window, yet knows not where he is, nor when he shall get the next meal, and at night must spread himself on a bush for a lodging. What a shame it is then for Christians that see before them such liberal provisions of their God, and find themselves set warm under their roofs, yet are ready to droop under a distrustful and unthankful dulness, and all but say, 'Can God make wonders in the heavens? can God prepare a table in the wilderness?'"

The words of our Saviour, under consideration have oft-times been misunderstood, and consequently perverted, in the experience even of the people of God. Some see in them a sanction to a kind of fatalism,—such as the Mahomedans exhibit in their conduct in the various

circumstances in which they are placed in life, grounded on what the Koran says in particular portions of it. On the same principle of interpreting what is said in the Bible on the subject of predestination, some men are altogether unconcerned about their salvation, saying, that if God has predestinated them from all eternity to everlasting life, they will be saved irrespective of themselves, and, that if they perish, they could have done nothing that would have prevented their perdition.

The construction which many have thus put on the words of Christ spoken on the occasion in question, is entirely at variance with all that He otherwise said and did during the period of His public ministry in our world. Instead of Himself manifesting indifference as to the future, He often showed that He thought much on what was destined to occur, both to Himself and His disciples, before the close of His and their lives on earth. He repeatedly referred, in the most touching terms, to the sufferings which He would have to bear, and the death He would have to die. It is not necessary that I should cite passages from the New Testament confirmatory of this. They are so numerous, and so well-known to every reader of the Bible, that it is not requisite to cite more than one of the number. Jesus, we are told, referring to His

crucifixion, said, "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." Here was an expression on the part of our Lord of intense anxiety as to what was future. So that we could, with even at least a seeming sanction from His example, read His words, "Take no thought for the morrow," in the sense that His disciples should not feel wholly unconcerned about what is wrapped up in the future. Our Lord, on this occasion, only cautioned those whom He addressed against an undue measure of concern about the future Providence of God.

We are not to be over-anxious in relation to what may be our experience or condition in our future history in this life, but while doing all we can ourselves, we are to leave what our future may be in the hands and under the direction of God. Christ Himself has set us an example of this in relation to His public ministry, so far as it related to Himself. And so He spoke and so He acted with regard to His disciples. He apprised them beforehand of what their sufferings and sorrows would be, because of their attachment to Him, when He had finished His course in this world and ascended to His Father in heaven. And as He prepared them for what inevitably would be their experience in this life because of their devotion to Him and to His

cause, they being still but men, they must have their thoughts more or less frequently fixed on their troubles, and ultimately their death, as martyrs. Nothing, therefore, could be more plain than that it is an altogether mistaken interpretation of the Words of our Saviour when He told His disciples not to be *over* anxious about the future in this life, that they should have no anxiety at all. All He meant was that they should repose confidence in God, that He would, sooner or later, and in His own time and way, make all things in relation to His dealings with them, work together for their present and eternal good,—their real good both in this world and in that which is to come.

It is wonderful how men, even otherwise of sound judgment, will pervert words which are so clear in their meaning, as most of our Lord's words, in this case, are. All Christ's teaching, when speaking of matters which pertained to this life alone, inculcated the doctrine of industry and carefulness in connection with a full persuasion on the part of those to whom He addressed Himself, that the Divine blessing accompanying their efforts, would render them more or less successful. What He cautioned those to whom on this occasion He spoke against was being so full of anxiety about worldly matters, as to make

them unmindful of the things of eternity. And the whole history of Christianity in the first three centuries shows that the apostles and early believers in Christ, made no such mistake about the meaning of the words in question, as to make men neglectful of those ordinary duties of life which even the instincts of our common nature teach us and enjoin us to practise. The well-known precept of Paul, "Be diligent in business," and his statement that the man who does not provide for his own family is worse than an infidel, are sufficient proofs, were there no others in the Scriptures, that the words of our Lord to which I have been referring, could not admit of such a misrepresentation as that which, by a strange misconception, has been by many persons put upon them.

The obvious purpose of our Lord in the language employed on the occasion in question, was to keep all earthly interests in due subordination to the salvation of the soul, which was, and ever will be, the one thing needful. And it is deserving of remark that in making the soul's salvation the first great concern, Christ promised that all other things would be added to it. All experience shows that, as a matter of fact, speaking of the thing as a rule, those who are the best Christians, are the most successful in life. Take any given number of real Christians with

the same number of persons not Christians, and I venture to say, it will be in almost every instance found that the Christians have been the most successful in life.

The more we reflect on the Words of our Lord which I have made the subject of my present "Meditations," the more shall we discern their loving character, and the loving character of Him from whose lips and heart they proceeded. It is inexpressibly blessed to those whose temporal circumstances are not, in themselves, encouraging, but the reverse, to hear the Saviour saying to them, "Fear not," in relation to the future of their life on earth. Though He gives no absolute promise with regard to their circumstances during the remainder of their life in this world, He seeks to cheer the hearts of such of them as may be struggling with the pressure of their troubles, by assuring them of His tender affection for them, and the providential provision which He has made for them. His promise to be with all His true followers, till the end of the world, will hold good, alike in a temporal and spiritual sense. That promise alone ought, indeed, to be enough to divest their minds of all undue solicitude with regard to the future of their life, and to make them lie passive in the hands of God, feeling assured that all the vicissitudes through which

they may have to pass, however painful to flesh and blood some of them may be, will be found at the closing scene, if not before, to have been among the best of the blessings which God ever bestowed on them. Implicit trust in the Providence of God, is one of the happiest frames of mind in which any one can be; while undue anxiety in relation to what may happen in the future, is a source of perpetual unhappiness, often so great as to render it almost impossible to bear. The late Rev. Ingram Cobbin, in his "Condensed Commentary," says, after quoting Matthew Henry to the same effect:—"Anxiety for the future day must rob us of the enjoyment of present blessings. Let us then learn to trust a gracious Providence, from every bird whose sweet note seems to praise its bountiful Benefactor, and from every flower that seems to send its fragrance as incense to the Father of Creation, who is also the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Who, with Him, will freely give us all things, as we may stand in need."

Happy, thrice happy,—and such only are truly happy,—those who unreservedly place their all, in relation to the present life, in the hands of a "Loving Lord and Saviour," who has lovingly said to all His disciples, "I will be with you alway, even to the end of the world." These

gracious words of our Saviour relate alike to the temporal and spiritual condition of those who believe in Him ; and no one who has the presence of Christ always with him, can ever lack any real good. Even his sufferings and sorrows, whatever may be their nature or number, will be transformed into sources of spiritual blessing. He will be able to say with the apostle Paul, when speaking of his poverty and privations in respect to his worldly circumstances, "Though having nothing, yet possessing all things." Happy he who can say with the same apostle, that in whatever state he may, in God's providence, be, he has learnt therewith to be content. While undue anxiety with regard to the future of one's lot in life, is a great sin, and most dishonouring to God, because distrustful of Him, the fact of placing oneself entirely in His hands, as in the hands of a loving Father, is an act which at once glorifies God, and will never fail to prove an abundant and abiding source of blessedness to himself. He who thus unreservedly commits himself and his ways to the keeping and direction of Him who hitherto has been his gracious Protector, and Who has promised to be his God and his guide even unto death,—can never be altogether unhappy in this life.

CHAPTER SEVENTH.

FURTHER LOVING WORDS OF OUR LOVING LORD AND SAVIOUR.

THE subject of my present, as of my previous "Meditations," is one which must be dear to every Christian. It is that of Christ's affection for those who are His true disciples. He could give no greater proof of His love to His followers than in the fact of His giving Himself up unto death for them, viewed in connection with the circumstances under which His death took place. My object now—in continuation of what I have written in several previous chapters—is to show how great was the love of our Lord Jesus Christ to His faithful followers, as proved by the "Loving Words" which He spoke to them when He was on earth. And that must be a supremely blessed subject of consideration to every real disciple of our Lord. I know of nothing more adapted to draw out, with increasing force, the love of our Saviour's

disciples towards Himself, than meditating on the "Loving Words" which He spake to and of them, when in our world.

In the eighteenth chapter of the Gospel by Matthew, we hear the voice and see the heart of our Lord in the words which follow. They were called forth by a quarrel among His disciples as to which of them should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Christ's answer to the question, after having called a little child unto Him, was as follows:—"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in My name, receiveth Me."

I lay much stress on these words of our Loving Lord, because, to my mind, they appear to place, beyond all question, the certain salvation of all those children who have not, at their death, reached the years of moral responsibility. Having myself experienced the loss of a loving and much-loved child at the age of four years, I can deeply sympathize with those parents who have not only sustained a similar bereavement, but have been, in addition to their loss, painfully exercised as to the question, whether the de-

parted in infantile life, had certainly been saved. For the comfort of all mothers and fathers, I rejoice to be able to say, that there is no doctrine in the Word of God, not absolutely and specifically revealed, in which I more firmly believe, than in the certainty of the salvation of all children dying in infancy. I have often wondered that anyone acquainted with the New Testament, could be found, that could entertain a doubt of the salvation of children dying in their infantine years,—who had read and reflected on the words of Christ which He spake on the occasion in question, in reproof of the disciples who were opposed in His day to the children being brought unto Himself. "Suffer," He said, "little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And "He laid His hands on them and blessed them." If any of my readers should be unhappy because of anxieties respecting the condition of departed children, dear to them as their own souls, let them be assured that their infants are now supremely happy with Christ, even had they no other ground for their belief than that our Lord, on the occasion in question said of all children, "For of such is the kingdom of heaven." And in accordance with His words He gave His blessing to them. Christ could never have said, "Of

such is the kingdom of heaven," and give His blessing in addition, if a single child should afterwards perish. Our Lord further said, in the fourteenth verse of the same chapter :—"It is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." And as we know that nothing ever did, or ever can, occur in the boundless universe of God, contrary to the Divine will, this statement of our Saviour is as conclusive a proof as any combination of words could furnish, that no child dying in infancy, or before it has reached the years of moral responsibility,—in other words, the capacity of distinguishing between right and wrong,—will be lost. I dwell on the point, because I personally know many parents whose minds have been deeply concerned with regard to the destiny of their dearly beloved children after death.

Though, as I mentioned in my introductory chapter, it was not my intention to confine myself to any chronological order in this series of "Meditations on the Loving Words of our Loving Lord and Saviour," I have thus far grounded them on the Loving Words of Christ as they are recorded in the Gospel by Matthew. There are three more passages in the Gospel by that Evangelist, to which I wish to call the special attention of my readers. If rightly considered, they

will be found to illustrate in a very remarkable manner, the tenderness of the Saviour's heart alike to sinners and to saints. The first words of Christ to which I refer are contained in the twenty-third chapter. After the terrible indictment which He had preferred against the worldly Jews generally, He proceeds to warn them of the certain consequences of their guilt. He addresses them in these solemn tones of mingled compassion and sorrow :—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

I could not imagine any form of words which could more forcibly express the loving heart of Christ than those which I have just cited. The very essence of tenderness is contained in them. "The apostrophe of our Saviour to Jerusalem," says Dr. Hales, "is inimitably passionate and tender." We see His loving heart in every word. Dean Stanhope gives his paraphrase of the Redeemer's words in the following terms :— "How many instances of the tenderest affection, how many offers of conversion and grace, of protection and defence from the calamities now approaching, have I laid before you, but ye re-

jected them all. The expression comprehends all the kind endeavours to convince and instruct them in the Gospel covenant, and to make them partakers of those privileges and that salvation which they rejected with such blind and unbending obstinacy."

Alas! that there should be so many individual cases in our day precisely similar to the case of those Jews in Jerusalem, to whom our Lord addressed the solemn words in question. In His glorious Gospel, Christ is earnestly and affectionately calling on sinners to come to Him that they may be saved, but how very few respond to his affectionate invitation compared with the multitude who make no response at all to His gracious entreaty to come to Him and be saved. Let me add, that the doom of all who persist in disregarding His loving invitations till death has put an end to their incapacity to accept them, will be precisely the same spiritually and eternally, as was that of the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem, when this awful apostrophe was addressed to them.

The next chapter of the Gospel by Matthew, leads me to that in which the terrible apostrophe of our Lord is recorded. They are words replete with His most intense tenderness to His disciples. Towards the end of the chapter the solemn transactions of the judg-

ment day are vividly brought in view by our Lord. In those solemn transactions the destiny of the wicked, as well as of the righteous, is brought before us with an effect which almost makes us suppose that we are actually spectators of the solemn panorama. But it is the words of Christ in relation to the righteous that we have almost exclusively to deal with. There shall be in that great day a separation made by Christ Himself of the righteous and the wicked. The latter shall be on the left hand of the Judge, and the former on His right hand. To the wicked Christ shall say, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." To the righteous,—those on His right hand,—our Lord will say: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." The reason why the former are placed on the left hand of the Judge, will be stated before an assembled world, as that of their not ministering to His saints when on this earth; while the affection shown to God's people in this world will be the assigned reason why they are to be admitted into the kingdom of heaven. How sweet ought to be, and must be, the words of our Saviour which will be pronounced by Christ, as Judge, on the day of the Great Audit, on those who have ministered to the

necessities of the saints in this world. O, how great His loving condescension in identifying them with Himself! "I was an hungered," are the words which He will address to them on the occasion, "and ye gave Me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave Me drink. I was a stranger and ye took Me in, naked and ye clothed Me. I was in prison and ye came unto Me." Unconscious of any service rendered to Christ while they were on earth, or rather not discerning any merit in anything they had ever done, the "righteous" will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink. When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? or naked, and clothed Thee? or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee?" And Christ will answer these several questions in the following words:—"Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of My brethren, ye did it unto Me." If anything could have added to the tenderness of these words of Christ, or if He could have more completely identified Himself with His disciples, it would have been the use of the words, "My *brethren*." Christ did not here speak of His then disciples only. All believers in Him are His disciples. But the phrase He employs in this utterance is a much more endearing one than

that. "My brethren," is the most tender phrase which He could have employed, just as of all the ties of human consanguinity the relationship of brethren is the closest and most tender. Christ is a Brother born for adversity. He is the elder Brother of all who are believers in Him. Elsewhere Christ says, just before leaving this world, "I ascend to My Father and your Father; to My God, and your God." But I shall have occasion to refer to the relationship of brethren in Christ, when I come to the consideration of Christ's words on the occasion when he used the phrase, "And all ye are brethren."

In the words of Jesus, on which I am now "Meditating," there occurs one which I have never seen noticed by any theologian writing on this utterance of our Lord. It is that in which He says: "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the *least* of My brethren, ye have done it unto me." To many a saint of God, not only the least in the world's estimation, but the least in his own of all the disciples of Christ, this will be a source of abounding joy. He may in his own view, and probably, too, in the view of the majority of his brethren in Christ, be the least of all saints; but still he is a brother in Christ, and whatever he may have done for the disciples of Christ, is regarded by

our Lord as having been done for Himself,—however little that may have been. Our Lord accepts the widow's mite as having more value in His sight, than the large amount cast into the treasury from worldly motives. It is a most consoling thought, that Jesus recognises no less as His brethren, all who have done for His disciples, in circumstances to require assistance, whatever their means enabled them to do.

Surely, no one could conceive of any more powerful motive to do all that we can for the relief of those believers in Christ who are in distress of any kind. The very thought that our Lord Himself will, in the day of judgment, recognise before an assembled world, all the services thus rendered to them as done to Himself, is sweet beyond conception. "These words," says Bishop Attenbury, "considered as they ought to be as to their general drift, press upon us two powerful motives to the practice of charity; the one that upon this point we shall certainly be tried and examined on the great day of account: the other, that acts of mercy done to the poor, will be accepted and recorded as done to our Saviour Himself."

CHAPTER EIGHTH.

CHRIST'S INVITATION TO THE WEARY AND HEAVY-LADEN.

I PROMISED in my last "Meditations on the Loving Words of our Loving Lord and Saviour," that so far as these are recorded in the Gospel by Matthew, I would make only one more utterance of Christ the subject of my further "Meditations." The passage to which I refer will be found in the 28th, 29th, and 30th verses of the eleventh chapter of that book. Our Saviour says in the passage in question:— "Come unto *Me* all ye that labour, and are heavy-laden, and *I* will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

In relation to this gracious invitation of our Lord, I would remark that, there are millions in heaven already, and many millions more of the saints of God who will yet be received into the many mansions

now in course of preparation by Christ for their reception,—to whom these words of our Saviour have been, and will be, inexpressibly sweet. None but those who have realised their blessedness, or are now, though passing through this vale of tears, tasting their unspeakable sweetness, can have any adequate idea of what that blessedness is. They have solaced the saints of God now in glory, in all the sorrows through which they have had to pass, and all the sufferings they have had to endure, in their pilgrimage to their home in heaven. And as the words in question have proved a solace and support to believers in Christ while passing through a rough and thorny road on their way to the rest which remaineth for the people of God, so millions have found them a source of unspeakable consolation to them when they approached the brink of the Jordan, by the thought of whose swellings they had been greatly troubled. The case of Bishop Butler, author of "The Analogy of Religion," probably the most triumphant defence of the religion of Christ which ever yet proceeded from human pen,—was a case in point. Notwithstanding Bishop Butler's masterly demonstration of the truth of Christianity, he doubted, especially towards the end of his life, whether he had been a converted man. In this state of mind he one day sent for one of his

curates, to whom he made known his anguish of mind. His curate, who was an eminently spiritually-minded man, called his attention to this invitation given by our Lord to all sinners, in connection with the assurance given by Him on another occasion, when He uttered the words, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." These gracious words of our Lord, when repeated to Bishop Butler by his curate, dispelled all his doubts, and enabled him to die in the firm faith of the Gospel, not only in so far as its doctrines were true in relation to himself, but as they bore on the spiritual condition of others. And the blessedness which Bishop Butler experienced on his death-bed from the words of Christ under consideration, has been experienced by myriads of others in their last moments.

But the blessedness of the words in question need not, and ought not to be, deferred till the near approach of death. They should be felt and enjoyed by every believer in Christ, in every period of his life. They were meant by our Lord to minister to the comfort of all who accept the gracious invitation thus given to them, the moment they do so. "Come unto Me," is but another phrase for "Believe in Me," and the moment the sinner heartily believes in Christ, that moment he finds rest and peace. Like the

Ethiopian, he goes on his way rejoicing, or like the many of whom we read in the New Testament, who, on their coming to Christ, or believing in Him, he finds a peace which passeth all understanding. It is true that the rest which the converted sinner finds on coming to Christ, is not perfect rest. That is not attainable in this life. It is only to be enjoyed when the Christian enters into His rest in the mansions in heaven, now in preparation for him by Christ. Yet in this life the believer's rest is so great as often to appear as if it were the raptures incident to the celestial state ; but there are fluctuations in it, and at times so prolonged are its interruptions, as to remind the most advanced believer in heavenly-mindedness, that he is yet in a world of sin. In the rest which remaineth for the people of God in their home in heaven, there will be no variations in the measure of repose which all the glorified saints will enjoy. It will be always the same. And it will be eternal, as well as perfect and unchangeable. But though, as regards immutability and duration, between the rest of the saints in heaven, and believers in Christ on earth there is a difference, the latter have, more or less frequently, so great a serenity of soul—so much of a holy tranquillity of mind, amidst all the circumstances incident to one's passage through these earthly scenes, as to

secure to him something resembling, even in this lower world, the rapture enjoyed by the spirits of the just made perfect in the world above. And it is to the enjoyment of this rest that Christ invites "all the weary and heavy-laden."

The invitation is to *all* the "weary and heavy-laden." All are meant, when Christ says "Come unto Me." There are no exceptions. None are excluded. How precious the word "all" here, and in many other portions of Scripture. There are few smaller words than "all" in the Bible; while, on the other hand, there are no bounds to its comprehensiveness,—just as where it is employed by the apostle John when he says, "The blood of Christ Jesus cleanseth us from *all* sin." Oh, how much less blessed would have been Christ's invitation to the weary and heavy-laden to come to Him, had the little word *all* been omitted, and the words had only been, "Come unto Me ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Many a troubled sinner would, in that case, have said within himself, that he was not sure that he was included in the Saviour's gracious invitation; but the words "*all* ye who are weary and heavy-laden," are so comprehensive that the whole world is included in them. There is not a weary and heavy-laden sinner on the earth, within the

sound of the Gospel, that is not embraced by those loving words of our loving Lord, "Come unto Me *all* ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

I have no doubt that the words in question, of our Saviour, were especially addressed to such as were labouring and restless under the burden of sin; but I have, at the same time, no doubt that our Lord had also in His mind all who were unhappy, or troubled in their minds from any cause,—just as Martha was troubled about many things. None of my readers need, I am sure, to be told that sin is the primary cause of all the misery that is in the world, but there are subordinate agencies which indirectly produce some of the unhappiness we everywhere see around us. The world is full of anxieties and troubles of every variety, which are not directly ascribed, even by those who are the subject of them, to the prevalence and power of sin. To all such I regard the words in question of our Lord as tenderly addressed,—only that before he who accepts the invitation receives the promised rest, Christ, by the Holy Spirit, convinces him of his sin; for no one, until he has been convinced of his sin, will ever come to Christ, any more than,—were that possible,—having come to Christ, he could obtain rest without the conscious pardon of his sin. I would only

here further say, that our Lord had, in a special sense, in His mind, when He said, "I will give you rest,"—the bondage in which all the Jews were, at the time, to the Ritualism which then prevailed in Judea. Peter has a special reference to this state of things when he said, addressing the Jews in connectiou with their religion, that they had attempted to put a yoke on the disciples' neck which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear. The Jewish religion was very appropriately called "a yoke of bondage." Deliverance from this intolerable yoke of bondage was a relief which every Jew received who responded to our Lord's loving invitation to come to Him, graciously connecting with the invitation the promise that those who accepted His tender invitation, would find rest.

Jesus repeats the assurance that those who responded to His invitation to come to Him should find rest to their souls,—adding, "for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." And so, in accordance with this assurance of Christ, have all who have responded to His appeal, found it to be.

The world believes religion to be a morose and miserable thing. All who were of the world, until their conversion took place, were of that opinion, but I venture to say that no one who ever sincerely and intelligently embraced the

religion of the Lord Jesus Christ, clung to this opinion afterwards. A belief in the truth of the Gospel invariably brings peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Then, for the first time, the converted sinner knows the supreme blessedness of that peace of God which passeth all understanding. But in order to this, it is indispensably necessary that the sinner should have come to Christ without any reserve. Any-one coming to Christ with reserves, or only partially, has no ground for the belief that he will receive rest. In other words, no one ever yet found joy and peace in believing in Jesus, who came to Him partially, or with certain reserves. As I have made the remark in one of my various books,—many men have just enough of religion to make them miserable; for there is no one more unhappy than he who has only a half-and-half religion. Without real religion no one can receive, no one can enjoy the rest which Christ has promised to all who accept His tender invitation to come to Him. But those who in reality believe in Christ, or do in the proper acceptation of His words, "Come unto Me," enjoy pleasures even in this life which the world knows not of. They have joys with which strangers do not intermeddle. They find the yoke of Christ to be, practically, a yoke only in name. Christ's burden is, indeed, light. They have His gracious sup-

port when any of their burdens presses heavily upon them. They realise in every contingency, in every season of sorrow, the fulfilment of Christ's own gracious promise,—"I will never leave you nor forsake you." And thus possessing the habitual blessing of Christ, how could any of His followers be unhappy? With this and other exceeding great and precious promises,—some of them giving comfort in sorrow, some adapted to meet the necessities of special cases, whatever they may be,—every believer in Jesus can and does feel His yoke to be easy, and His burden to be light. Many of those, indeed, who have taken His yoke upon them can say that it is not only light, but that it is no burden at all. On the contrary, they find it to be a supreme pleasure to bear it.

Just as I had concluded these last sentences, I chanced to meet with an extract from one of the works of Bishop Beveridge, which expresses substantially the same sentiments,—"So easy," says that spiritually-minded prelate, whose "Private Thoughts on Religion" I have often read with much enjoyment:—"So easy is the yoke of Christ, that to the faithful Christian it is a pleasure rather than a trouble to bear it. He is a Master who will never require more of us than He will give us grace to perform, nor lay a greater burden upon us than He will give us strength to bear."

CHAPTER NINTH.

THE COMPASSION OF THE SAVIOUR FOR SINNERS.

THOUGH it was not on the same occasion as that on which our Lord invited all to whom He addressed Himself when He said, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest,"—that He gave utterance, in the 40th verse of the 5th chapter of the Gospel by John, to the words, "And ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life,"—the latter appropriately call for one of our "Meditations on the Loving Words of our Loving Lord and Saviour." Christ in those words expressed His deep sorrow, that those to whom He addressed Himself, would not come to Him that they might have life. He sought to convince them that they were inexcusable in not coming to Him, inasmuch as the Old Testament Scriptures, in which they all believed, clearly pointed to Him as the promised Messiah. Several of our best

Biblical scholars are of opinion that instead our Lord here giving an injunction to "Sear the Scriptures," He recognised the fact that th did search the Scriptures, and that therefore I words should be rendered, "Ye search the Scr tures." Dr. Campbell, of Aberdeen, Dr. Doc ridge, and Boothroyd, are among those who understand the words of Christ when speaki on this occasion. Certainly this view of passage would have made the guilt all the grea of the Jews to whom our Lord thus spoke. if, in the words of Archbishop Newcome, had said, "And yet, though these Scriptu testify of Me, ye are not willing to come u Me." Bishop Beveridge paraphrases these Wo of our Lord in the following language :—"A He had said, 'Ye believe the Scriptures to be gi by inspiration of God to direct you in the v to eternal life, and therefore ye expect to f how to obtain it; and if ye search the Scriptu ye may there see that they testify of Me,—t I am the Christ, the Son of God, by Whom al ye can obtain eternal life.'"

But my chief object in calling attention to words in question of our adorable Lord, i view them in their loving nature. Brief tho they be, they are full of affection. They exp the love and compassion of Christ for thos whom they were addressed by Him. He

invited them to come to Him in tender terms. They were included among those to whom He said, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." How many of those whom He addressed in the latter language, accepted, or how many rejected, His gracious invitation, we have no means of knowing; but we have no reason to believe that those to whom He said, "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life," ever, as a body, did come to Him. On the contrary, we have Christ's own Words for the lamentable fact, that they would not and did not come to Him.

Our Lord, while on earth, was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and in the words in question we see an utterance of His loving heart mingled with the sorrow of His soul, that His gracious invitation to come to Him, was rejected. I feel I am not indulging in any mere fancy when I make the remark, that while the words themselves were full of sympathetic affection for those to whom Christ, on this occasion, addressed Himself, there must have been something in the expression of His countenance, and in the tones of His voice, which must have greatly increased their sense of the love, mingled with pity, which filled His heart. I have sometimes tried to picture to myself what the Re-

deemer's accents and looks must have been when he uttered the words in question. As the Evangelist is silent as to whether or not, the tears streamed down the Saviour's cheeks or gathered in His eyes, we would not be justified in giving any opinion on the point. We know that He shed tears over Jerusalem, and that those who persist in a final rejection of Christ, will be no better off than the guilty inhabitants of that city. But in the absence of anything to justify an opinion from what we find in the Word of God, I always abstain from bringing forward any views of my own on any subject. I believe it is a prevalent sin in the present day, to seek to be wise above what is written. Suffice it, therefore, in this case to say, that no one can read the words of our Saviour, "And ye will not come to Me, that ye may have life," without feeling a thorough persuasion that His heart was full of emotions of pity for them. He knew the magnitude of the loss which they would sustain by not coming to Him. The "Life" which He would have given to them if they had accepted His loving invitation to come to Him, would have been inconceivably great in its measure, and eternal in its duration; while by their refusing to come to Him, there was the very opposite,—the blackness of darkness for ever, with all the *other so*urces of the misery of the lost, which are

so appallingly set forth in the language of Scripture. No wonder then that Christ, under such circumstances, should have expressed His sorrowful emotions, that those whom He addressed on this occasion, imploring them, as we are sure He did in the most touching terms, to come to Him, —failed to respond to His tender entreaties. We, even now, can almost imagine we hear the plaintive tones in which the Saviour spoke on the memorable occasion. Never was the observation more true in the history of the world, than in this case, and, indeed, in all cases in the life of our Lord,—"As the heart thinketh the mouth speaketh." His words were a kind of wail, when He said, "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life."

This language of our Lord admits of a special application to sinners in the present day. Oh, how vast the multitude of those now living, in relation to whom our Saviour could say, with as great truthfulness as He did to those to whom the language was, in the first instance, addressed! "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life." It would be carrying Christian charity to an extent for which we have no warrant in Scripture, to assume, that it is not true of *some* of my readers that they have not yet come to Christ. That would be contrary to all history in the past, and to all observation in respect to

the present. Well, then, let me, with all the kindness of which one's nature is capable, seek to impress on those of my readers to whom my remarks apply,—that great as was the guilt of those Jews, who were thoroughly conversant with the Old Testament Scriptures, of whom Christ said, "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life,"—the guilt is incomparably greater of those who live under the Gospel dispensation, that have been earnestly and affectionately invited by Christ to come to Him, and have disregarded His loving invitation,—have never, in other words, come to the Saviour.

CHAPTER TENTH.

OUR LORD LAYING DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS SHEEP.

I PASS over various utterances of Christ when on earth, which are more or less to be classed under the heading of "Loving Words of our Loving Lord and Saviour," in order that I may be able to devote more of my space to the succession of "Loving Words" which He spake as recorded by the apostle John, from the tenth to the seventeenth chapters of that Evangelist's book. In this portion of the evangelistic history of our Lord, we have more of the exceedingly affectionate words spoken by Him, than in any other portion, or, perhaps, all of them taken together, which proceeded from Christ's lips as emanating from His loving heart.

In the tenth chapter he addresses His disciples as a Shepherd, and then shows by various phrases, the tender affection which he feels for them. "I am," He says in the eleventh verse,

"the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." In the fourteenth verse our Lord repeats the expression, "I am the Good Shepherd," adding to it the words, "and know My sheep, and am known of Mine." In the fifteenth verse He says, "And I lay down my life for the sheep." In the next verse but one, our Lord repeats the expression, "Therefore doth my Father love Me, because I lay down My life." So that, within the compass of a few verses, Jesus repeats three times the expression of His laying down His life for His sheep. This repetition of words denoting the strongest affection for His disciples, must have made a profound impression on their minds, and drawn out their most ardent affection for their Loving Lord and Master. During the whole of His public life our Lord had furnished them with remarkable proofs of the tender affection which He bore to them, but He was now about to give them the greatest proof of all,—that He was willing and ready to lay down His life for them. The words were most loving in themselves, but they were made additionally so, by reason of their being thrice repeated. It needs no mental effort to conceive what a deep impression they must have made on those that heard them. How the disciples' *hearts* must have been touched by the fact that

He had given them so many tokens of the ardent affection which He felt for them during His association with them. He had given them, daily and hourly, unmistakeble proofs of the affection which He cherished for them; but this was to be the crowning as well as closing proof of all, according to the terms employed by the Lord Himself,—"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And this proof, in addition to all the other proofs which Jesus gave of His love for His followers during His public ministry, He was now on the eve of giving. And the Redeemer's words must have made all the deeper impression on the minds of His disciples, and all the more powerfully touched their hearts, by the words which followed from His lips:—"No man taketh it (His life) from Me, but I lay it down of Myself."

These memorable words of our Saviour have an immensely greater importance in them than if regarded only as a mere expression of His affection for His disciples. They are unspeakably precious if viewed only in their ordinary sense; for, as I have just remarked, our Lord Himself had said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." The pre-eminently precious point in these words of Christ consists in the fact of His

having laid down His life voluntarily on the Cross. That point, I fear, is often overlooked, when reading the portion of Scripture in which the words occur. Had our Lord been unwilling to die for sinners; had He, in other words, been compelled, against His will, to die for the ungodly, then His death would not have been productive of any saving effects whatever. His death would have possessed no atoning efficacy at all. This is a point on which believers in Christ cannot dwell too much, or meditate on too often. There is no more precious, or more important fact in the wide range of Scripture than that Christ did not die by constraint or compulsion, but voluntarily, in the most enlarged acceptation of the word. Had it not been so, not one single sinner in the world could have been saved, or ever could be saved. As in the case of the Apostle Paul, every believer has to fall back on the *self*-sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. All believers, with one accord, appropriate to themselves the language of the apostle of the Gentiles, when he said, "He loved *me*, and *gave* Himself for *me*."

I repeat, that these are most precious words,—words of infinite importance. They contain the essence of the Gospel. The more frequently and more abundantly every believer in Christ meditates upon them, the more blessed will they be

found by him. They are alike adapted to solace the souls of all real Christians in life, and to support them in the hour of death. And let me further say, that in the mansions of bliss and glory in heaven, the fact that Christ gave Himself voluntarily unto death for them, will be a subject of constant contemplation on the part of the glorified saints, and an unceasing source of their perfect happiness.

I do not remember whether, in the course of these "Meditations on the Loving Words of our Loving Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ," I have made the remark, that my heart rejoices in the numberless indirect proofs of the deity of Christ with which the Bible abounds. This tenth chapter of the Gospel by John, on a part of which I have now been Meditating, is one in which there are a number of these indirect proofs of the perfect Deityship of our Lord. He declares that after he had laid down His life for all who should be saved, He had power to take it again. No created being, not even the loftiest archangel could have said this. None but a being who was God could have made use of such language. And the event of our Lord's resurrection on the third day verified His words, and proved that Christ was God. Then, again, our Saviour says, speaking of believers in Him, "And I give unto them eternal life, and they

shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. I and My Father are one." No more conclusive proof could any one wish of the perfect Deity of Christ than is furnished in these words of our Lord. I advisedly assert that even if believers in Jesus had no other ground for their faith in the co-equality of our Lord and Master with the Father, the words of His which I have just cited, would be found amply sufficient to prove the perfect Godhead of the Son.

The Words of our Lord when He said, "I lay down My life for the sheep," are eminently adapted for a personal application to every believer in His name. If He was so devoted to His disciples, that He was willing to lay down His life for them, each of us ought to ask ourselves what have I done, or what am I doing for Christ? If He gave us the most perfect proof which it was in His power to give, of the greatness of His love to us, what evidence are we giving of our love to Him? He could furnish no greater proof of His infinite affection for those who believe in Him, than He furnished throughout the whole period of His public ministry, and in His sufferings and death on the Cross,—what then have we done, what are we now doing in the way of self-sacrifice for Him? If He showed His love for us by the greatest

self-sacrifices which He could make on our behalf, are we to shrink from such self-sacrifices as we may be called to make for Him? Will we not rather regard it as our highest honour that we should be called on to suffer in any way for His name's sake, and thereby show to the world our love to Him who manifested the greatness of His love to us by His sufferings and death on Mount Calvary? Surely, so far from shrinking from any reproaches and sufferings, under any form, for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, which we may be called to make, we ought to be able to say with the apostle Paul, that we glory in being counted worthy to endure reproaches and sufferings for His name's sake.

CHAPTER ELEVENTH.

FURTHER LOVING WORDS OF OU LORD AND SAVIOUR.

THOUGH there are various "Loving Words our Loving Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ," the intermediate chapters between the tenth the Gospel by John, and those to which, that chapter, I have referred in my previo "Meditations," and the fourteenth chapter the same Gospel to which I am now about call attention, I pass them over, because t plan of this series of papers renders it nece sary.

The opening verse, if it stood alone, wou suffice to show to us what a loving heart o Lord and Saviour possesses. "Let not," I said on the occasion in question, to His di ciples, "Let not your heart be troubled, believe in God; believe also in Me Some of our most eminent expositors thi that the meaning of our Lord in this pla

would be better rendered thus, "Be not so troubled as to be put into a hurry and confusion, like the troubled sea. Be not ruffled and discomposed. Be not cast down and disquieted." This was the view which Matthew Henry took of the words in question of our Lord and Saviour. Other expositors of the Bible think that the passage would be better expounded if the phrase, "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me," were translated, "Ye *trust* in God, trust also in Me." Of those who take this last view of the latter part of the verse, there are several of our best Biblical authorities. Among them are to be included the names of Luther, Dr. Doddridge, John Wesley, Boothroyd, and Dr. Campbell, of Aberdeen. On the other hand, such authorities as Beza and Grotius prefer the translation of these words of Christ, as given in our translation of the Gospel by John.

For myself I cannot discern any essential difference between the former and the latter rendering. I regard the words "*believe* in God," as given in our version of this part of the Gospel by John, as having essentially the same meaning as "*trust* in God." My idea is that wherever the phrases "believe in God," and "trust in God," are used in the Scriptures, they mean the same thing. No one can "believe"

in God, without "trusting" in Him, while he who does trust in God must believe in Him. I do not, on various theological points agree with Archbishop Tillotson, but I am quite in accord with his rendering of the words of Christ to which I am now calling attention. "Our Lord," says Archbishop Tillotson, "here prescribes the proper remedy against trouble: namely, trust and confidence in God, the great Creator and wise Governor of the world, and likewise in Himself the blessed Son of God."

We have no precise information as to any specific cause why the disciples of Christ were, at this time, troubled in their hearts; but most probably it was because of His being about to depart from them. But be that as it may, it is the lot of all believers in Christ to have troubles peculiar to themselves, in addition to those which are common to the world. It will be observed that the consolations which our Lord sought to administer to His disciples, were such as would not have been suitable to any who were not believers in His name. Mere men of the world have never yet been comforted by anything of a spiritual kind. They never think of heaven, much less have any wish to be there. But to the saints of God there can be no source of comfort in sorrow so great as to feel assured that, sooner or later, their troubles will be

brought to an end, never to be again experienced by them.

"In my Father's house are many mansions," were the next words of our Lord. "Many mansions." A sufficient number to accommodate, if I may use the expression, not only those whom Christ particularly addressed at the time, but all who should prove themselves to be His disciples, till the end of the world. Until the last hour of time it will be true, in relation to admission into heaven,—"And yet there is room." Heaven never will, if I may so speak, be *too* crowded. Were *all* the present inhabitants of the earth, and all that shall follow hereafter, till the final hour of the world's existence, to enter heaven, there would be ample room in it even for that multitude,—one so great that no one could number it.

The words which followed from our Lord's lips were,—"If it were not so I would have told you." How condescending as well as affectionate! If there were not a sufficient number of mansions in heaven for all the disciples, to provide for their perfect and perpetual glory and bliss, He would, He assures them, have told them so. And He follows up that assurance by saying that He was about to ascend into heaven to prepare a place for them. That was most encouraging, and well adapted to remove the trouble which

weighed on their hearts at the time ; but He added, "If I go,"—as certainly as I go,—"and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also." Each successive word which our Lord spoke to His disciples on this occasion, seems to have deepened in blessedness, and must have inspired emotions of love and gratitude to their Lord, which it would be impossible for any language to express. It will be the presence of Christ in heaven with His glorified people, which will constitute the chief element in heaven's happiness. The mansions which He has prepared for His followers in the celestial state, will be in themselves glorious and blissful beyond the power of the mind to conceive ; but without His own presence in them, they would fall immeasurably short of what they will be with His presence.

But He will be for ever in heaven with His glorified disciples, and His presence will be something better than even heaven itself. I can conceive I hear some one say, "What could be better than heaven?" Though glorious and blessed beyond the capability of language to express, there will be something in heaven better even than itself. Christ Himself will be there. All its ineffable glory and blessedness will be centred in the presence of Christ. Even in this

life, notwithstanding all the sorrows incident to sin, many of God's people have, through their views of the person and work of our Lord, such bright and blessed perceptions of the ecstatic happiness to be hereafter enjoyed, as to imagine themselves in such a transcendance of glory and bliss as eye hath not seen nor ear heard. But in heaven all will be real; and the perfection of everything glorious and blessed will, as I have already remarked, be found centred in Christ. The realised presence of our Lord on earth transforms, in a sense, this world into heaven; and if so, what will be the glory and bliss of heaven when the spirits of the just made perfect will for ever see the King in His beauty?

But much as there is to rejoice the hearts of the people of God amidst their troubles while passing through this vale of tears, there is even more in the latter words of our Lord when He says: "I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also." Any words more blessed, if viewed in the fulness of their meaning, are not to be found, in relation to heaven, in the Word of God. It is essentially, as if He had said, "Heaven would be wanting in something essential to My happiness, if you, My disciples, were not there with Me." The blessedness of this thought is greater than the mind can conceive. How sweet amid

all the ills of life, how precious in the hour of death—and it will prove an inexhaustible fountain of joy through all eternity,—to know that our Lord and Saviour will be in heaven for ever and ever with all His faithful followers.

CHAPTER TWELFTH.

FURTHER LOVING WORDS OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR.—(*Concluded*).

In my last "Meditations on the Loving Words of our Loving Lord and Saviour," as these are recorded in the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel by John, I confined myself to the consideration of the first three verses of the chapter.

But the space I have allotted to myself, being insufficient to admit of a full expression of my thoughts, I now wish to make a few additional observations.

There is something more in this third verse of the fourteenth chapter of John's Gospel, than is contained in the latter clause. In hastily reading the verse, one is apt to infer that there could be nothing to surpass the blessedness contained in the words,—"That where I am there ye may be also." But to

my own mind there is something even more blessed in the words which precede, where Christ after assuring His disciples that He was to ascend into heaven to prepare mansions for them, adds,—"*I* will come again, and receive you unto *Myself*." The more one medidates on these words of our Lord, there appears to me to be a measure of blessedness in them which ought to overwhelm the mind of everyone who seeks to fathom their depth. "*I* will come again and receive you unto Myself." Christ Himself will come again to bring His true disciples to the mansions which He has prepared for them. It would have proved an act of surpassing kindness and condescension, had our Lord sent some of the loftier order of angels to bring them to Himself in glory. Angels are, we are told, ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who are the heirs of salvation; and they are represented as the guardian angels of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, in their perilous pilgrimage through this life; but our Lord has not only Himself prepared mansions in heaven for His faithful followers, but He will *Himself* bring them into the glorious abodes which He has thus prepared for them. He would not confide the office of bringing His blood-bought disciples to heaven, even to the highest order of angelic hosts. The duty is

so delightful that He will honour them by performing it Himself. He will come from heaven to conduct thither all who are His true disciples on earth. The words seem to me to admit of being rendered thus :—"I will come again to earth and conduct to the heaven of heavens all for whom I suffered and died, and who were sincere and steadfast in their fidelity to Me while they were in the world below."

And not only will every faithful follower of Christ on earth be at last conducted by Him to the mansion prepared for Him in heaven, but will be received when there to our Lord Himself. "I will receive you unto *Myself*," are His words, and they are of surpassing sweetness. The mind cannot enter into the fulness of what is contained in them. They involve the fact of a closeness of intimacy with Him, and affection on His part for them, of which it would be impossible in ordinary language to convey an idea. Among the most popular of our hymns, there is one favourite, beginning with the line :—

"Safe in the arms of Jesus."

This is true of all believers in Christ in this life. Every disciple of His is perfectly safe here, because united to Him by faith, but there will be a special sense in which all the redeemed will be "Safe in the arms of Jesus" in the celestial world. "I will come again and re-

ceive you to Myself." Blessed, thrice blessed prospect for every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, to have the assurance from our Lord's own lips, that all those, for whom He shed His blood on earth, He will bring to their eternal home in heaven, there to be for ever with Him. Most of our commentators interpret what our Lord here says about His coming to earth again to receive His disciples to Himself, as an allusion to His coming again on the day of judgment. There can be no doubt of that being the primary meaning of Christ's words; but I have always so rendered our Lord's language in this particular part of Scripture, as being also applicable to His coming to take His true disciples to Heaven, at the time of their death. "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." And if this be so, every true believer is received by Christ the moment of his departure from this world. This conviction has always proved a source of unspeakable happiness to believers in Jesus. It is a source of comfort which never fails to sustain them amid the troubles and trials of life, however great and numerous these may be; and it fills their souls with a holy solace and support in the prospect and hour of death.

In order to connect what our Lord said in *relation* to the Holy Spirit as a Comforter, in

this fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of John, I have passed over the intervening verses from the sixteenth to the twenty-sixth. But some of these intervening verses are much too precious to be overlooked. How very sweet, for instance, is the eighteenth—"I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." Only a moment before Jesus had sought to comfort the minds of His disciples, by assuring them that He would pray the Father that He would send them another Comforter, that He might abide with them for ever. But there is in this verse, brief though it be, something which is, I fear, often overlooked by Christians, yet which is most blessed and important to know. Our Lord does not simply say that He would pray to the Father to send the Comforter, but He states, in the most positive terms, that the Father would most certainly send Him. Our Lord said, in one of His prayers to the Father, recorded in another chapter of the same Book: "I know that Thou hearest me alway." What an unspeakable comfort it is to the saints of God to know that every prayer offered up by Christ on their behalf, is heard and answered by His Father in heaven. Their own prayers may be unheard, and, consequently, unanswered by God, because the best of us often, in our ignorance, ask amiss. But no prayer of Christ for

His disciples ever yet failed, or ever can, to come up with acceptance on God's altar. Who shall measure the length or the breadth,—who shall sound the depths of the comfort to the saints of the Most High, which there are in the great fact that the intercession of Christ on behalf of His disciples, never yet failed of success, and never will nor can, while He sustains the character of their Mediator before the throne of His Father in heaven.

But there is something even more comforting than this to believers, in the words of our Lord when He assured His disciples that in answer to His prayers God would give the Comforter to them. It was not for a brief period, or for special occasions only, that the Comforter was to be given. It was to be for *ever*,—that is, He was to be sent while Christ's disciples should remain in the world. The Holy Ghost was to abide with them so long as His enlightening, sanctifying, and comforting influences would be needed. They will be so while in this life, and will therefore be ever enjoyed by all the people of God. But in heaven the Holy Spirit's offices will not be needed, because all will be perfect in knowledge, perfect in holiness, perfect in bliss in the mansions prepared for their reception, and to which they will be introduced at the hour of their death. But how unspeakably

blessed it must be to all believers in Christ to know that so long as they remain in their present condition, more or less subject to ignorance, and exposed to temptation, to sin and misery in their varied forms, they have the assurance of their Lord, that the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, "will abide with them for ever."

Passing over other "Loving Words of our Loving Lord."—which are rather indirectly so —I come to those which are as directly loving as could be desired by any of our Lord's disciples. What could be more directly loving than the words contained in the fourteenth and fifteenth verses:—"Whatsoever," said Jesus to His disciples, "ye ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My name I will do it. Could any combination of words more forcibly express the warmth of the Saviour's affection for His followers, than the language in question? It will be observed that He here repeats a second time, almost in the same breath, His willingness to grant to His disciples whatever they asked in His name. It is sad to think that there should be so many of the followers of Christ who forget these precious words of their Lord, and consequently ask so little in His name. Practically, such disciples of Christ do not take Him at His word; and

often when they do ask blessings from God in the name and through the merits of Jesus, their petitions are limited to blessings which are few in number, and less in magnitude than our Lord would wish them to be. His words clearly imply that there are no blessings, either too great in number or in magnitude for Him to bestow. Just observe the words which He employs. "*Whatsoever* ye shall ask in My name, *that* will I do." And again, "If ye shall ask *anything* in My name I will do it." More explicit language than this, or a more specific promise to His disciples, could not have been employed or made by our Lord. It amounts to this,—just as if our Lord had said it in so many express words,—"You cannot ask too great or too many blessings in My name. If you confine your prayer to that which it would be for God's glory to give, or your good to receive, whatever may be your petitions, I will grant them."

What an encouragement to believers in Christ to ask great things of and through Him. The very fact, indeed, that Christ gave Himself is, in itself, an assurance that He will give His followers *all* things which would be for their present and eternal interests to receive. As God has given His Son, how shall He not freely with Him give His people all things? What is here said by Paul in special reference

to God the Father may, with equal propriety, be said of Christ the Son,—He gave Himself for sinners. And if Jesus gave Himself for sinners, who can doubt His willingness to give His followers whatever they ask of Him? I venture to say that there is no sincere believer in Christ who may read these observations, who will not confess, speaking of himself, that he is conscious of having erred in asking too little and too seldom in the name of God's Son. No believer in Jesus ever yet asked too much of His Father. The more we ask of God the Father in the name of Christ the Son, the more do we please and honour both the Father and the Son.

No one, it would be supposed, could intelligently read the words of Christ in question, without clearly discerning in them conclusive, though inferential proof of our Lord's Divinity. Had He not been essentially God, He never could have asked His disciples to pray to Him for *anything* and *everything* which they desired to have. In making this remark, I repeat what I have before said, that I delight to dwell on the conclusive, though indirect proofs with which the Word of God abounds, of the true Deityship of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And here we have another proof of this kind—that He is on an essential equality with the Father; *for none but* a Divine Being could hear and

answer all prayers, whatever might be the nature of the blessings which the petitioners invoked. The only conditions necessary to insure a favourable answer to prayer, are, that the prayer be in accordance with the revealed will of God, and be presented in the name of Christ. What an encouragement this for believers in Jesus to be often and earnestly pressing their petitions before the throne of the heavenly grace.

In the troubled state of the minds of the disciples, at the time our Lord thus spoke to them, His words, in the eighteenth verse of this chapter, must have been especially full of comfort. Alluding to His departure from the world, and His consequent separation for a time from them, Jesus said, in the words already cited, "I will pray the Father and He will give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth." In the twenty-sixth verse, He makes reference to the way in which the Holy Spirit would administer comfort to the distressed disciples. "The Comforter," He says, "which is the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." The New Testament abounds with confirmations of *the truth* of what our Lord here said in relation to *the Holy* Ghost bringing anew to their minds the

blessed words which Jesus used before and after His resurrection. Things which He had said before His crucifixion, and of which they had no intellectual understanding, were brought to their minds after He rose from the dead, with a wonderful vividness and power. They saw things then with a clearness which filled their minds with surprise that they had failed to discover them before. And it is through the illuminating influences of the Holy Spirit, that the saints of God in the present day have any clear conception of the dealings of God with them, alike in providence and in grace. The "other Comforter" who was to come to the disciples of Christ, after His departure from the world and ascension into heaven, was, says Dr. Hammond, paraphrasing our Lord's own words:—"To enable you"—His disciples—"to understand all those parts of My speeches which are more obscure, and put you in mind that all things which I have said to you here are fulfilled, and what they mean."

The term, Comforter, which our Saviour here applies to the Holy Spirit, is one of the most endearing which could be applied to the saints of God. There is not a saint of God, however great may be his attainments in holiness, who does not need Divine consolation, and it is the prerogative of the Holy Ghost to supply that consolation. But for the operations of the

Divine Spirit on the minds and hearts of believers in Christ, they would be of all men most miserable; because, otherwise, they would have no well-grounded hope, in this life, of a happy hereafter. But the Holy Spirit, by reminding believers in Christ of the various words which the Saviour spoke to His people when He was on earth, ministers comfort to them with a fulness which causes their sorrows to flee away, and their minds and hearts to be filled with a joy which is unspeakable and full of glory.

And what believer in Christ is there that cannot, speaking from his own experience, set his seal to the truth of the words in question of our Lord, and record the fact, that he has more or less frequently been blessedly reminded that the Comforter has brought to his remembrance words of our Lord which have ministered to him an inexpressible comfort in seasons of deepest sorrow?

CHAPTER THIRTEENTH.

CHRIST'S LEGACY TO HIS DISCIPLES. —HIS LOVE FOR THEM.

THOSE profoundly touching "Words" which our Lord addressed to His disciples in the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel by John, to which in our last two "Meditations" we have called the attention of His disciples in the present day,—are continued, more or less blessedly, till the end of the chapter. Our last thoughts were directed to the "Loving Words of our Lord," as they are recorded in the twentieth verse of the chapter. In the succeeding verse our Lord seems to sum up the expression of His loving-kindness for His disciples. "My peace," He says, "I leave with you; My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." The peace of Christ! The mind is utterly lost when it seeks to form even the slightest conception of the blessedness of the man who possesses the peace of Christ. It is a

peace which passeth all understanding. It is a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. While without the peace which our Saviour left as His last legacy to His followers, all are spiritually destitute, on the other hand, those who enjoy it are incomparably richer than if they possessed an unlimited share of the riches of this world. There is nothing at all to be compared with the peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost with which, when sent by Christ from heaven, He was to fill the minds and hearts of every believer in Jesus. Even in the midst of all the troubles by which the Christian may be assailed, and must needs be assailed, while passing through this world, he can and does enjoy peace. Our Lord Himself, in the thirty-third verse of the sixteenth chapter of the same Gospel of John, says, still speaking to His disciples, "These things have I spoken unto you that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in Me ye shall have peace; be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." It was as if Jesus had said, "As I have overcome the world, be not cast down, but rejoice with exceeding joy; for as certainly as I have overcome the world, so certainly will ye triumph over it too." The words which their Lord and Master spake to them in this part of His loving address, were substan-

tially the same as when He said, on another occasion, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

How unlike the peace of the world—if indeed the world can give anything worthy the name of peace—is the peace of Christ! "Not," added Jesus, when he bequeathed the legacy of His peace to His disciples, "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." What a mercy it is, that, our Saviour's peace is not only unlike the peace of the world, but is altogether the very opposite! The peace of the world never yet ministered any real happiness to any human being, and never will nor can. The peace which the world gives its votaries is insincere, unsubstantial, unsatisfying. There is no heart, no real enjoyment in it; and all who have received it will set their seal, speaking from experience, to this representation of worldly peace. The phrase is indeed a misnomer or contradiction. But the peace which Christ imparts is a high and holy peace. It has its fluctuations in the experience of most Christians, but the normal peace enjoyed by believers in and imparted by Christ, is a serenity of soul of which the world can form no conception. Every believer in Christ comprehends what no man of the world ever did comprehend,—how it could be that the people of God can, though sorrowful, yet be always rejoicing. O, how happy they who

have received the legacy of peace which Christ bequeathed to His disciples just before His death!

And as before the death of Christ so also after His resurrection our Lord took a special pleasure in promising peace to His disciples. It was His favourite word when speaking to them on the several appearances which He made after His resurrection. And yet, by that strange inconsistency of which we are all more or less guilty, how many believers in Christ do not enjoy the peace which it was so manifestly His desire when on earth, that His followers should enjoy. It is true, that there are many of God's saints who do enjoy an almost perfect serenity of soul. Their assurance of faith is habitual, but my own observation, as well as the recorded experiences of others is, that very many believers in Jesus do not habitually possess that peace which passeth all understanding, and which ought to be enjoyed by everyone who has experienced the application to his heart and conscience of the peace-speaking blood of Christ.

The early part of the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel by John, contains many "Words" of our Lord and Saviour, in relation to the union which subsists betwixt Him and His disciples, *which are* of a "loving" kind; but to these the

plan of this series of papers precludes the possibility of my making even a brief allusion.

But I must not pass over what Jesus says in the ninth and tenth verses. "As," says He, "the Father hath loved Me, *so* have I loved you." There is a difficulty here to which I have referred in a similar passage, in a previous chapter. Taken in their literal meaning the words would imply that our Lord loved His disciples with the same fervour of affection with which the Father loved Himself. My view of the passage is that our Lord rather referred to the resemblance which His love bore to His disciples, than to the degree wherewith the Father loved His Son Jesus Christ. But the point is one on which it is the wiser course not to speculate. It ought to be enough for every believer in Christ to have the uniform and emphatic attestation of Scripture to the great fact, that our Lord loved all His disciples with an infinite affection.

Our Lord added, in the verse in question, still addressing his disciples, "Continue ye in My love." How unspeakably comforting to them amidst all the sorrow which filled their hearts at the thought of His impending departure from them, must have been this renewed assurance which Christ gave them at such a moment, of His unbounded love.

Not either the nature or the number of the sorrows and sufferings through which He was on the eve of passing, diminished in the slightest degree, or even for a moment made Him forgetful of, the unbounded affection which He felt for them. It was the desire of His heart to love them till the end, with the same ardent love as that with which He had loved them from the moment He had chosen them to be His disciples. But in conjunction with Christ's desire that their continuance in His love might be assured, He plainly points out to them that they must keep His commandments. This is a point of incalculable importance, and it is one which many of the disciples of Christ are in great danger of forgetting. A neglect of or disobedience to His commandments, is at variance with the will and Word of God, and is displeasing to our Lord. Of this He gave many remarkable proofs in the days of His public ministry. I would, before passing on to other portions of the "Loving Words" which our "Loving Lord" spake to His disciples, earnestly desire to impress on the minds of my readers, and on my own mind no less, the words in the tenth verse of this fifteenth chapter of the Gospel by John: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love: even as I have kept *my Father's* commandments, and abide in His

love." Our Lord and Saviour's words, in the verse which follows, are :—"These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." These words are inexpressibly full of the love which Christ cherished to His disciples, and of the happiness with which the consciousness of their Lord's love to them, filled their hearts. There are few passages in the New Testament in which the perfect union which subsists between Christ and His disciples are more clearly set forth than in the one just cited. His joy had hitherto been in His affection for them, and their joy in their love to Him; and He desired that His joy might remain in them, and their joy be full to overflowing after His departure from this world. What an unspeakably delightful idea, that not only should the happiness of all believers in Christ centre in Him, but that His joy or happiness might no less centre in them! The more the fact is meditated upon, the more does its ineffable blessedness appear.

In the fifteenth verse there are endearing words of our Lord addressed to His then disciples which have proved a source of inexpressible sweetness to the hearts of His disciples in all the intervening ages since His death. "Henceforth," He says, "I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his

Lord doeth ; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard of My Father I have made known to you." Who can fail to be struck with the condescension of our Lord and Saviour in calling His disciples *friends?* It is the most endearing of all human terms, and has always been so regarded since the appellation was given to Abraham, as being the friend of God. "Ye are My *friends*," said Jesus to His disciples, whom He addressed on the occasion in question. And the friendship which our Lord cherished for His disciples was of the most tender and intimate kind. He furnished them with a proof of that tenderness and intimacy, by adding, after stating that He called them "friends," "for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." What a privilege! What a high honour, on the part of our Lord's disciples, to have personal revelations made to them direct from Christ Himself! *All* things,—all things necessary for their happiness to know, which He had heard of His Father. And though not now personally, as in the days of Christ's tabernacling in our world, yet all His disciples in the present day are made acqainted, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, with all things which it is for their happiness to know. According to our Lord's promise, immediately before His departure from the world,

the Holy Spirit now teacheth them all things, and bringeth all things to their remembrance, whatsoever our Lord had said when discharging the functions of His public ministry during His stay on earth.

CHAPTER FOURTEENTH.

CHRIST'S PRAYER TO GOD ON BEHALF OF HIS DISCIPLES.

I NOW come to those Words of Christ which are recorded in the seventeenth chapter of the same Gospel of John, and which constitute a prayer to His Father on behalf of His disciples. Any prayer of Jesus to His Heavenly Father could not fail to be regarded by every disciple of His with profound interest, but there is that in this prayer of our Lord which invests it with a special preciousness. It is chiefly offered up to God on behalf of His disciples. Oh, what a tenderness, what a fulness of affection pervade throughout, this prayer of Jesus to His Father! There is something in His very attitude in it inexpressibly touching. "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven." One can almost mentally picture to himself the uplifted eyes to heaven of our Lord and Saviour,—*the ten*derness of His love shining in His face.

The occasion, too, was one of the deepest solemnity. "Father," said Jesus, "*the hour is come.*" The hour of His betrayal by Judas, the hour of His agony in Gethsemane, and the hour of His humiliation and suffering on Mount Calvary, was at hand. He thanks and adores His Father in heaven, that He (His heavenly Father,) had given Him all power in heaven and on earth. Then follows the reason why our Lord rejoiced in the delegation of this almighty power from God to Himself. It was that He (our Lord) should give eternal life to as many as God had given Him. How clearly and blessedly is the doctrine of God's electing love here stated. I pause for a moment to remark, that if the doctrine of the sinner's salvation being the result solely of God's sovereignty, had no other sanction than in these words of our Lord, it would be by them sufficiently taught, and sufficiently attested.

Coming down to the sixth verse of the chapter, no believer in Christ can fail to have his heart filled with joy while he listens to his Lord's "Loving Words" spoken to His Father in relation to His disciples. "I have," said Jesus, "manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world. Thine they were and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy Word." How kindly, with what

affection, Jesus here represents the conduct of His disciples to His Father,—as if it had been that the merit belonged to themselves; whereas they were kept in the pathway of righteousness by the grace of their Lord and Saviour, just as He says, in a subsequent verse, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name; those that thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled."

In the ninth verse we still find our Lord praying to His Father in heaven on behalf of His disciples. And how unspeakably blessed are His words in this part of His remarkable and loving prayer. "I pray for them," said our Lord, "I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine." What believer in Christ could desire anything more than the assurance of Christ that he is God's,—one of God's saints, one of His people? If so, he cannot fail to know that his salvation is as sure as if he were already in heaven. "None," says our Lord, in another place, "shall be able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." Then, again, how blessed to every believer must be the words which Christ adds to those to which I have just called attention:—"And all Mine are Thine; and I am glorified in them." What a wondrous verse is this tenth! All

Christ's disciples are God's people. And all God's people are Christ's disciples. One has surely cause for being lost in wonder and praise, at this expression of our Lord, whereby the perfect unity of the Father with the Son in their love for and interest in those who are God's saints and Christ's followers, is so clearly stated! They are sharers equally in the affections of God the Father and Christ the Son, and are ever under the protection of the First and Second Persons in the Trinity. Could we but realize these precious truths, how would our hearts be drawn out to God and to Christ, and how happy because so secure under their joint protection! Is it not amazing that so many of the saints of God and followers of the Lamb, fail so frequently to appreciate the holy privilege of realizing their high calling both in God the Father and Christ the Son? Many of them are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, and yet they can remain hours together without one vivid realization of the great and glorious fact.

Still we find the solicitude of our Lord centred on His disciples, notwithstanding the awful personal events which were impending. "And, now," He says, "I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name

those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one as We are." The words evidently include a perfect oneness among Christ's disciples themselves, but especially their oneness with both God the Father and Christ the Son. What a wonderful unity! Believers in Christ not only united by faith to Him in bonds which never can be broken, but united by as close and tender a union with the Father as with Christ Himself! Marvellous mystery! It is one which will occupy the thoughts of the redeemed through all eternity, without there ever being even an approach to its complete comprehension.

In the following verse we are furnished with very touching proofs of Christ's intense affection for His disciples. Still addressing His Father in heaven, our Lord says, "And now come I to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves." "My joy!" meaning that His disciples might have all the joy which Christ wished them to possess. In other words, all the joy which He, their Loving Lord and Saviour, could wish them to experience in this life. And though the joy is in Christ in passing through this world of sorrow and suffering, none but themselves can form any idea, but myriads on myriads have, in past times, partaken of that joy; and millions now

are the blessed participators of it; and all God's saints ever will be so while the world endures. It is, indeed, a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

To believers in the present day, it is an unspeakable happiness to know that Christ cherishes the same affection for them as He did for those who were His devoted followers when on earth. After praying for their increased sanctification, He adds the gracious and "Loving Words" in relation to them in all the intervening ages between the time at which He then spoke and the end of the world:—"Neither," says our Saviour, "pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one as Thou Father art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." The loving Saviour adds another prayer in the following verse in connection with a most precious declaration. "And the glory," says He, still addressing His Father in heaven, "which Thou gavest Me I have given them, that they may be one, even as We are one." No one who reads this part of the chapter of the Gospel by John, can fail to be struck with the all-absorbing desire which our Lord manifests for the perfect oneness of His disciples. And to give a greater emphasis to His words, He prays that there may be as complete

a unity of feeling and conduct among them as there exists between Himself and His Father. In the succeeding verse He again, as He had just done before, goes further, and prays for the union of His disciples with Himself. "I in them, and Thou in Me." How glorious this relationship of the saints of God! United to Christ, and Christ one with God the Father! Alas, that there should be so many of the disciples of Jesus who fail to prize as they ought to do, this high and Holy relationship. And how many of God's people, too, fail in their cultivation of that spirit of union among themselves which was so dear to our Lord,—as is shown by His earnest and frequent entreaties to them to live in accord, both in mind and conduct, in their relationship with each other.

Most touching is the concluding verse of this seventeenth chapter of the Gospel by John. It has more the form of a declaration than of a prayer to God. "I have," our Lord says, still continuing to speak in the fervour of His affection for His disciples, "I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me, may be in them, and I in them." These are the closing words of our Lord in the memorable prayer to His Father which comprises the last *of the* four Gospels to which in my previous three

"Meditations," I have been specially inviting the attention of my readers. What wondrous words they are! Who shall measure the length and breadth, who shall fathom the depth, who form any idea of the height of the Saviour's love for His people which are expressed in the language which He here employs? Not only can that never be done in this life, but never in the life to come. Amazing will be the accessions of knowledge which the glorified saints will receive in heaven, and every fresh accession will make an addition to their happiness, but eternity itself will be too short to enable the redeemed to comprehend the greatness of the love of Christ to His disciples.

I have now come to a close in my "Meditations" on the more marked "Loving Words" which our "Loving Lord and Saviour" spoke as they are recorded in the fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth chapters of the Gospel by John. These are truly most remarkable chapters. There is nothing anywhere in human books which, for the tenderness of the speaker's utterances, can at all be compared with them. Milton could never hear them read, after he was visited with the calamity of blindness, without displaying the deepest emotion,—which emotion seldom failed to give expression to itself in tears. An intimate lady friend of mine,

the wife of a General in the British army, who attended Garibaldi for the long period of four months during his confinement to bed, after the severe wound he received at the battle of Aspromonte,—once mentioned to me that he was so profoundly affected by the four chapters in question of John's Gospel, that he asked her to read to him one of these chapters for four successive mornings. And the lady in question added that no words which she could use could furnish any idea of the depth of his emotion while she was reading them. "Garibaldi," remarked my lady friend, "appeared to have his whole nature profoundly affected by the words of our Lord in these portions of Scripture. He was quite overpowered by them." And hard, indeed, must be the heart which could read them, or hear them read, without an access of deep feeling. The very heart of our Lord and Saviour is revealed in them. And what clothes them with an additional pathos and power, is the fact that Jesus, while He spoke these "Loving Words" to His disciples, had before His mind all the agonies of Gethsemane, and all the sufferings and humiliations of the Cross. Yet, instead of the terrible scenes in which He had in so brief a space of time to pass through, absorbing His own soul, *His thoughts* were centred on His disciples.

Well may the question be asked, "Was there ever love like this, viewing it only in the light of human affection?" The answer is, "Never." The world's history contains no record of anything which even approaches to it.

CHAPTER FIFTEENTH.

CHRIST'S LOVING WORDS AT HIS LAST SUPPER AND ON THE CROSS.

THE next meeting which our Lord had with His apostles, after that described in the four chapters of John's Gospel which I have brought under notice, was the one at which He instituted the Sacrament, which is called the "Lord's Supper." That was to be the last meal of which He was to partake with His disciples. To Him it must have possessed a specially solemn and intense interest. At their first sitting down to the table, it is evident they did not know that it was destined to be the last occasion on which they would eat and drink with their Lord and Master on earth; but they had not proceeded far in partaking of their meal, when, as we are told by Luke, "He said unto them (His apostles), with desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I *suffer*; for I say unto you, I will not any more

eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." On this solemn and deeply touching occasion, we see the same tender affection for His apostles that filled our Lord's bosom, which we have discerned in the various words of His to which I have called attention in preceding pages:—"With desire have I desired to eat with you this passover before I suffer." He was on the eve of His death, yet His affections were still supremely centred on eleven of His apostles. It was not a simple or common desire that our Lord at this time felt to eat this passover with His apostles, but an intense desire. In the marginal reading of the New Testament, it will be found that the rendering of the words is, "With earnest desire have I desired to eat the passover with you." Bishop Pearcy says, in relation to the phrase in question, "This is a Hebrew phrase, signifying, 'I have very much desired.'" The meaning which Grotius attaches to the words of our Lord, is expressed in this remark, "The reason of our Lord's anxiety to eat this passover with His twelve apostles, may probably have been His wish to initiate the ceremony of the Lord's Supper." But be this as it may, one thing is certain,—that this, in a sense, was the last act of our Lord in His intercourse with His apostles. One illustration of His tender affection for them

was given in the words which followed those,—"With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer," which our Lord addressed to His apostles when He broke the bread and gave it to them. "Do this," He said, in remembrance of Me." That was the end for which He instituted the Sacrament of the Supper. He wished to perpetuate until the sound of the last trumpet, the remembrance of His sufferings and death on behalf of all who should believe in Him till the end of time. This is the duty, and ought to be the delight of every true disciple of Christ, at all times, and under all circumstances; but, alas! it is a duty too much neglected. What believer in Christ does not, with sincere sorrow of soul, confess his shortcomings in this respect? But not only are all Christians laid under the most solemn obligations to remember in their individual capacity our Lord in relation to His sufferings and death, but they are bound, at stated periods, in their capacity as members of a Christian Church to commemorate the close of our Saviour's life, by sitting down at His table. And what a high and holy privilege every real Christian finds to be his commemoration of the sufferings and death of Christ in communion with His fellow believers in Him, in obedience to His command, "Do this in

remembrance of Me." The Saviour's last words on this occasion, addressed to His apostles, were emphatically "Loving Words." They were words of love and commendation. He had, with the one awful exception—I refer to that of Judas,—words of praise for their fidelity to Him: "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me; that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." These were remarkable words, addressed to His disciples generally, for they were not intended to be confined to our Lord's apostles. And when it is remembered that a few moments before the words in question were addressed to His apostles, the latter were having great strife among themselves, as to which of them should be greatest in the kingdom, who can fail to be profoundly affected by such a display of the loving kindness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?

I must make two more references to the "Loving Words of our Loving Lord and Saviour," which He spake while in this world. When the officers of the chief priests went to our Lord to arrest Him, He asked them "Whom seek ye?" And when they answered,

"Jesus of Nazareth," He answered, "I have told you that I am He; if, therefore, ye seek Me, let these (His disciples) go their way." I know not any combination of words that could be made which could, under the special circumstances in which they were spoken, more fully unfold the loving heart of our Lord. Still unmindful of Himself in all the agonies and all the humiliations which He was on the eve of passing through, His thoughts and affections were centred on His disciples! Oh, most wondrous fact! Oh, the intensity of our Saviour's affection for His disciples! How true what is elsewhere said, "Whom He loveth, He loveth to the end." And as our Lord's lips spoke nothing, but as emanating from His loving heart, so His last words in life were prayers to His Father that the very persons who crucified Him should receive the pardon of their sins, and the consequent salvation of their souls. "Father," was His last prayer, "forgive them, for they know not what they do." That prayer was doubtless answered; and those, who crucified Him, pardoned and saved: for we have His own word for it, that He knew that His Father heard Him always.

There was yet one more "Loving Word" which our Saviour spoke when on the Cross. It was in answer to the prayer of one of the

two thieves who were crucified with Him, that Christ would remember him when He came into His kingdom. Our Lord responded to that prayer of the thief in these loving and blessed words :—"Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." What a blessed and loving end to the loving life which our Lord and Saviour led when on earth!

CHAPTER SIXTEENTH.

CHRIST'S LOVING WORDS TO HIS DISCIPLES AFTER HIS RESURRECTION.

I COME now to draw the reader's attention to the "Loving Words" which our "Loving Lord and Saviour" spoke to His disciples after His resurrection from the dead. His first appearance was made to the women who had gone to the tomb on the third day after Christ had been laid in the grave, in accordance with the invitation of the angel who had appeared to them and said, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." The women had been before at the tomb of Christ, but on seeing the angel resplendent in his celestial glory, they had been filled with great fear. On, however, his saying to them, "Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus who was crucified," their fears all vanished, and they went into the Saviour's tomb and were convinced by His empty grave that He had indeed risen from the dead. The angel further said to

the women, "Go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and, behold, He goeth into Galilee. There ye shall see Him; lo, I have told you." Matthew, in his narrative of the circumstances, adds, "that they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, and did run, to bring His disciples word." Though the word "fear" is here used, it does not mean "fear" in the sense of terror. It was that holy fear which at times pervades the minds of all Christians, without having anything in it resembling the element of unhappiness. That indeed is placed beyond all doubt by the three words which follow, "and great joy. And," as, it is added, "they went to tell His disciples, Jesus met them, saying, 'All hail.' And they came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him." "All hail," were thus the first "Loving Words" which our Lord addressed to His disciples on His resurrection from the dead. So that the grave did not diminish His ardent affection for His disciples. As the last words He had spoken to them before His crucifixion were words expressive of the tenderness of His heart towards His apostolic disciples, so the first He uttered on rising from the tomb to the women who had been to his tomb, were the language of love. His loving solicitude for those of His disciples when they met Him, was

further manifested by Him, when, seeing them, as was natural under the circumstances, somewhat discomposed, He said unto them, "Be not afraid; go tell my brethren, that they go into Galilee, and there they shall see Me." He calls those of His disciples who were to see Him in Galilee, by the endearing relationship of "Brethren." Dr. Adam Clarke, and most other commentators on this passage think that the disciples here spoken of were the apostles, now numbering only eleven, by reason of Judas' betrayal of the Lord; but Grotius is of opinion that our Lord's object in going into Galilee immediately on His resurrection, was that He might manifest Himself to all His disciples there, respecting whom we are told by Paul in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, that Christ appeared to five hundred at once, who thus became witnesses of His resurrection.

To my mind it is clear that it was of His eleven apostles that Christ spoke when He told the women to go and tell His brethren that they should go into Galilee and meet Him there. The women could not have personally known all the Christians in Galilee; but, in all probability, they were individually acquainted with the eleven apostles. And the circumstance of letting them be the first to know of His resurrection from the dead, only furnished additional

evidence of the greatness of His affection for the very disciples who all forsook Him and fled at the time of His crucifixion. Who can meditate on this manifestation of the loving heart of our Loving Lord, without being lost in wonder at the tenderness of His affection for those eleven apostles who had deserted Him in the hour of His greatest emergency?

So far, I have followed the account given by Matthew, of the first appearance of Christ after His resurrection. Mark, in his account, introduces the name of the Apostle Peter, as of the only one of the eleven apostles to whom Christ desired the women to say that he was to see Him in Galilee. Oh, how clearly and fully does this prove the loving heart of our Lord! It was Peter that had denied Him in the greatest crisis of our Lord's life, with the exception of His crucifixion, and yet Peter was the only one of His eleven apostles whose name He mentioned as the one to whom he was about to reveal Himself as having risen from the dead. The words of Archdeacon Newcome are very striking, and his observations are very just in relation to this incident. "Observe," says that eminent divine, "The kindness of our Lord to Simon Peter. He did not show Himself apart, after His resurrection to John, His beloved disciple, but to him who had thrice de-

nied Him, who had bitterly bewailed his course, and whose mind required to be soothed and strengthened."

But before the appearance of the risen Christ to His eleven apostles, He had manifested Himself to two of His disciples whom He had met with, when on their way to Emmaus, a village seven or eight miles distant from Jerusalem. Our Lord entered into conversation with those two disciples about what had happened within the few previous days at Jerusalem. They were sad at the crucifixion of their Lord, but did not know who it was that talked with them, although He expounded to them the Scriptures, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, so far as concerned Himself. His observations are not recorded. Indeed, the remarkably touching narrative is only given by Luke. Neither Matthew nor John makes any mention of the incidents, and Mark only makes a passing allusion to them. But though the words of our Lord are not given by any of the Evangelists, we know they must have been most "Loving Words," because Luke records the fact that these two disciples, after Jesus had "vanished out of their sight," said one to the other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and opened to us the Scriptures?" No small controversy has taken place as

to who one of the two disciples was with whom our Lord had this meeting, and this conversation. The name of one was, we know, Cleopas, whom John informs us was the husband of a sister of the Virgin Mary, and therefore was, by marriage, a brother-in-law of the Virgin. With regard to the identity of the other disciple with whom our Lord and Saviour met and conversed on this memorable occasion, some of our learned theologians suppose he was Luke Himself. Others are of opinion that the other disciple was Peter. But I cannot see the slightest reason to suppose that he was the other disciple. With respect to Luke the Evangelist, he was not an apostle, and as all the eleven apostles—except Thomas, called Didymus—met that same day at Jerusalem, the fact that the two disciples whom Jesus met with on their way to Emmaus, found the eleven apostles at Jerusalem on their arrival there, makes it at least possible that the other disciple might have been Luke. It appears to me certain that Peter was not the other disciple; for in addition to the fact that he was an apostle, there was this other fact, that he had been at the sepulchre of Christ in the morning of that day, and therefore could not have been ignorant of our Lord's resurrection.

But this is, to a certain extent, a digression from my purpose in bringing before my readers the

"Loving Words" which our "Loving Lord" spake after His resurrection as an exemplification of His loving heart towards His disciples. So affected were "Cleopas and the other disciple" with the conversation which they had with the Lord on the way to Emmaus, that immediately after His vanishing from their sight, they set out for Jerusalem, to acquaint the apostles who were then assembled there, with the appearance which He had made of Himself to them, and with what had passed at the meeting. On their arrival at Jerusalem they found the eleven apostles assembled together. They had been previously informed by Simon Peter of Christ's resurrection. While the two disciples were narrating to the apostles what had occurred between them and Jesus, He suddenly appeared. "He stood, Himself," Luke tells us, "in the midst of them, and said unto them, 'Peace be unto you.'" Here, again, on our Lord's first appearing to His apostles after His resurrection, we hear Him accosting them with Loving Words emanating from His loving heart. Supposing that they had seen a spirit, the apostles were terrified and affrighted. Seeing this, Jesus at once sought to quiet their minds by saying, "Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" And in so *saying,* He furnished them with certain proof

that it was their Lord and Master, by asking them to behold His hands and His feet. This removed all the apostle's doubts and dispelled all their fears. "Then," we are told, "were the disciples glad when they knew that it was their Lord." This was on the evening of the first day of the week. Eight days afterwards our Lord again appeared to them in Jerusalem under somewhat similar circumstances, with the same salutation, "Peace be unto you." Thomas, who had been absent on previous occasions, was present on this second appearance of Christ to His apostles after His resurrection. Thomas had, until this second appearance of Christ to His apostles, disbelieved in His resurrection. Jesus knowing this, said to Him, "Reach hither thy fingers, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless but believing." Thomas did as he was invited by His Lord and Master to do, and the result was an entire conviction of Christ's resurrection from the grave,—which conviction he expressed in His full belief in the Godhead of Christ, as well as in His resurrection from the dead. Who can read this incident soon after the resurrection of our Lord, without being profoundly touched with a sense of His love and condescension to His disciples.

Jesus showed Himself again to His disciples at the sea of Tiberius. They had been fishing all night, but had caught nothing. In the morning Jesus appeared to them on the sea-shore; but the disciples, we are told, knew not that it was Jesus. He having said unto them, "Children, have you any meat?" they answered, "No." He then directed them to cast the net on the right side of the ship, adding, that if they did so, they would find fish. They did as He commanded them, and the result was that they were not able to draw the net to shore for the multitude of fish which had been caught. See, again, the loving heart of our Lord in this incident. He first addresses His disciples as "Children,"—one of the tenderest of all human relations. But the manifestations of our Lord's loving heart towards His disciples did not end here. When the fish had been brought to shore "Jesus," we are told, said to His disciples, "Come, and dine." See, again, the loving kindness of the Lord. The disciples had been out on the sea all night, and must have been cold and hungry. His ministering to them in this way, while he spoke to them in the most endearing language which he could employ, must have made a deep and abiding impression on their hearts. It is added, that when He said, "Come, and dine," "None of the disciples durst

ask Him, Who art Thou? knowing that it was the Lord." It was when Christ thus said to His disciples, "Come, and dine," that He revealed Himself to them.

One more appearance of Christ to His disciples after His resurrection remains to be noticed. It was the last appearance He made to them on earth. The narrative of this appearance of our Lord, constitutes, at the same time, a narrative of His disappearance from the world. The description is given by Luke, and forms the conclusion of his Gospel. "And He (Christ), led them out," says that Evangelist, "as far as Bethany, and lifted up His hands and blessed them, and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And were continually in the temple praying and blessing God. Amen." Here we see, in a very touch- manner, how Jesus, as He had spoken loving words to His disciples while with them in the world before His death, and on every occasion when He met with them after His resurrection, proves His affection for them both in His last words and in His last action. In the very act of His ascension to heaven, He pronounced words of blessing on them. How delightful the thought that our Lord ascended from earth in the very act of bestowing blessings on all those

of His disciples who were privileged to witness His ascent. What their emotions were when they saw His uplifted hands, and heard the gracious utterances of His loving lips, may be inferred from the fact stated by Luke. "And," says that Evangelist, "they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy." I cannot understand how any one could, for a moment, doubt the Divinity of Christ, who reads the words in this verse, "And they worshipped Him." It is difficult to reason with those who maintain,—as all the Unitarians do,—that the worship was no more than an expression of esteem for our Lord as a mere man. It could not be that; because Jesus *had* ascended up on high, and, therefore, as a mere man, He must have been unconscious of the homage so rendered to Him. That the disciples who witnessed the ascension to heaven of their Lord, worshipped Him in His capacity as God, is a clear inference, from the fact that they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, such as the bestowment of a blessing by a mere man could not have filled their hearts with. Besides, they were, after this, until the out-pouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, "Continually in the temple praising and blessing God."

CHAPTER SEVENTEENTH.

OUR LORD'S LOVING WORDS SPOKEN FROM HEAVEN TO HIS DISCIPLES ON EARTH.

AND now that our ascended Lord is seated at the right hand of God in heaven, He is revealed to us in the Scriptures, so far as they speak of Him amidst the glories of the celestial world, as still the same Loving Lord to His disciples on earth as He was in the days of His humiliation here below. He now proves His affection for them by the character which He sustains as their Advocate with the Father ; and in addition to the prayers which He offered up to God on their behalf when on earth, He now pleads the atoning work which He accomplished on the Cross, when He shed His blood for every sinner who should believe on Him till the end of time. We have not much information furnished to us in the New Testament as to the precise words in which our Lord in His exaltation on high

speaks of His disciples on earth, but we know that He is as full of affection for them in heaven above, as He was when He spoke of them and to them when He was here below. Some persons, indeed, believe that our Saviour's love in heaven for His followers who are still on earth, is greater in His state of exaltation than it was in His state of humiliation when He was in our world; but that is a great mistake. He loved them here below with the same infinite affection which the Father did and does; and we know that no intensity of love can be greater than that which is infinite. But then, though our Lord does not and cannot love His disciples, in His exalted state in heaven, more than He did in His humiliation when on earth, it is the happiness of every believer to know, that his love to Christ will be greater, when he has reached the realms of bliss, than it was or ever could be in the present life. Here all was imperfection; there all will be perfection. And amongst the elements of heavenly happiness, will be the clearer sight and deeper sense which all the glorified saints will ever have of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ towards them.

The only words which Christ is represented in the New Testament as speaking after His ascension to heaven, of or to His disciples *while they* remain in this world, are those re-

corded in the Book of Revelation. In the second, third, and last chapters of that book, we find that His words to His followers in this world, abounding with affection, are essentially the same as those which He spoke to His followers with whom He associated when on earth. While pointing out certain faults in the church of Ephesus, and reproving that church for them, He speaks in loving accents of their Christian excellences. To the Church of Smyrna, His words are words of tender affection. He comforts the members of that church, in their troubles, by telling them that He knew their tribulations and poverty, but that they were yet unspeakably rich; and He adds, in the way of exhortation:—"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." How blessed must these words of Jesus have proved to the members of the church in Smyrna, and the discouraging circumstances otherwise in which they were placed! And how blessed they must be to those who believe on Him now!

While pointing out the great and grievous shortcomings of the Churches of Pergamos, Thyatira, and Philadelphia,—even to the two Churches, Sardis and Laodicea, against whom the Lord had preferred the most serious charges,—He addresses himself to them in loving language. The Church of Sardis He exhorts to "be watchful,

and strengthen the things that remain and are ready to die." Even to the Laodician church, notwithstanding its coldness and luke-warmness, and assumed riches, He says, "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." The "Loving Words" which our Lord on this occasion spake to the members of the Church of Philadelphia, were remarkable for the intensity of their affection, and are equally applicable to the followers of Christ in the present day. "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God; and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God; and I will write upon him My new name."

These, I repeat, are most blessed, most Loving Words, spoken by our Loving Lord from off His throne of glory in heaven. They prove, if, indeed, proof were necessary, that He who showed His great love for His followers on earth, when He *gave Himself* unto death for them, still cherishes

the same infinite affection for them amidst all the glory by which He is surrounded in those glorious realms in which He is now, conjointly with His Father and His God, in heaven.

In the concluding chapter of the Book of Revelation, and, indeed, the concluding chapter of the Scriptures, our Lord and Saviour, speaking from off His throne of glory in heaven, thus speaks not only in relation to believers in Him, and thereby the saved, but to all :—"And the spirit and the bride say, Come, and let him that heareth say, Come. And let Him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

These are most "Loving Words" of our Lord, inviting those who have not come to the Saviour, to come at once. They are exactly in accord, now that Christ is in heaven, with the words which he addressed to the unconverted when he was on earth. "Come," were His words, then, "Come all ye that labour and that are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." His words now are, "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Thus far I have spoken of the proofs which

our Saviour furnished when on earth of His fervent affection for His disciples, and of the love which He still cherishes to His disciples who are still on earth, now that He is exalted at God's right hand in heaven. But I would be guilty of a great omission did I not say something of the manifestations of our Lord's love to His disciples in their glorified state in heaven. Apart from what is said on this point in so many portions of the Bible, there is one which multitudes of God's saints have found inexpressibly dear to their hearts,—have been filled with unspeakable joy. I refer to the words which our Lord addressed to every disciple of His who remains faithful unto death, as He appears immediately after death in the presence of our Lord as his judge. Our Lord accosts every disciple of His appearing in His presence, with, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?" These are, indeed, Loving Words, and being spoken by Christ at such a time, and under such circumstances, they must be clothed with a blessedness so great as can only be conceived by those to whom they are addressed. And what must add to the supreme happiness of their effect will be the beaming joy and brightness of His countenance, and the tender melody *of His* accents. And what an entrance that

will be for every believer in Jesus. It will not be an entrance into heaven to come out again. Every one that is thus ushered into heaven by our Lord with His Loving Words ringing in his ears and gladdening his heart, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,"—will never have to leave it. The entrance will be for all eternity. The joy of the Lord for everyone who passes the portals of heaven will be as everlasting as the throne of God. How inconceivably bright, how ineffably blessed, the prospect of thus being, through the endless ages of an eternal world, listening unceasingly to the Loving Words of Christ, lost in the effulgent radiance of His countenance, and ever feeling that all their bliss will be as enduring as the existence of God Himself.

"For ever with the Lord,
Amen, so let it be."

What reader of this little work will not echo the aspiration?

CHAPTER EIGHTEENTH.

THE HEART OF GOD AS REVEALED IN THE WORDS OF CHRIST.

I NOW come to the consideration of a phase of Divine truth which I approach with a special solemnity of spirit. The reason of this is, that the subject is one on which my mind has in past periods of my life, been deeply exercised. And not doubting, indeed, knowing, in relation to certain individual cases that there are many of the best of believers in Christ whose minds are similarly exercised at the present time,—I bespeak the prayerful attention of my readers to the observations which I am about to make on what I regard as one of the most important aspects of Scriptural truth which can occupy the reader's mind.

The subject to which I refer is the greater or less prevalence of the erroneous views which exist among the people of God regard*ing* the relation subsisting between God the

Father and Christ the Son, in the parts which each sustain in accomplishing the sinner's salvation. If I cannot say of all my readers—and I rejoice I cannot—that they do not give to God that place in the work of man's redemption which the Bible does, I feel assured that many of those who read these remarks will acknowledge that the charge is true of them. They will confess that they regard God the Father and Christ the Son with more or less different feelings. They are unable to divest their minds entirely of the idea, that there is a certain austerity in the character of God which does not exist, in their views, in the character of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Hence they view the Father with a kind of slavish fear, while they see in Christ Jesus the Son, nothing but the most tender affection towards them. Like Adam when he fell from his state of innocence, all his descendants would, if they could, flee from the presence of the Father, while they would rush into the arms of Jesus as to a place of refuge from the displeasure of God.

They imagine God to have a perpetual frown on His face, which repels them, while on the countenance of Christ they discern nothing but a radiant smile. In other words, they shrink back from God, and feel in relation to Christ

as if they could rush into his arms, ever open to embrace them. I am very desirous that I should not be misunderstood in what I say on this most important point. Such a state of things is not, happily, normal with the people of God; but I speak what I do know when I say it is much more common than those disciples of Christ who are personally strangers to it can be easily made to believe.

Having dwelt at so much length on the proofs which Christ Himself has furnished from the loving words of His loving heart, it will be my endeavour to prove, in what follows, that God's heart is as full of love to His people as our Lord's was, and is, to His disciples.

With such views of the First Person in the Holy Trinity as those to which I am adverting those who unhappily entertain them do great injustice and dishonour to God the Father. Our Lord Jesus Christ is, in other words, exalted above God by these Christians. He is, in effect, regarded as inferior by them, so far as relates to the matter of salvation, while Christ is looked upon in the light of their friend. This is an awfully mistaken and God-dishonouring view of the positions which the Father and Son respectively occupy in the scheme of human redemption.

The first intimation given of a method *being* devised for the redemption of our

race, caused by the fall of our first parents, was by God Himself when He made the gracious utterance :—"Deliver him from going down to the pit, for I," that is, God the Father, "have found a ransom." This was spoken by God in the counsels of eternity. And when, in those counsels of eternity, we first hear the voice of the eternal Son, it is by offering Himself to come in our nature to our world, to carry out the merciful provision which God had formed for man's redemption. "Lo! here am I," were the words of our Lord, "send Me." In accordance with these words, our Lord Jesus Christ repeats again and again, that He was sent by the Father into the world to save sinners.

Where this mistaken view prevails, the person who has embraced it, practically transposes the scheme of man's salvation. He forgets that to the Father the authorship of the plan of redemption is to be ascribed. It is to Him that it is specifically attributed by the apostle Paul; and the whole current of New Testament Scripture is to the same effect. Our Lord was sent by God the Father into our world in our nature to obey, and suffer, and die for sinners.

All through the public ministry of our Lord, He emphatically impressed this great fact on all to whom He preached His Gospel. And in working out our redemption, He never ceased

to declare that in all He did it was not His own will only, but also the will of Him that sent Him. Is it not strange, then, that any believer in Christ should be found, who could regard the Father as an austere Being in relation to them? For they, in a sense, turn away from God, while they feel as if they could flee to, and repose in the arms of Jesus as in those of a loving friend! May I ask some of my readers whether such has not been, more or less, at times, their past experience? May I not go further still, and put the question to at least some of their number, "Is not this, more or less, your experience, while your eye is passing over the words which I have just written?" To such I would say, has it never occurred to you, that while in this state of mind you are at once doing dishonour and wrong to God, and bringing great unhappiness on yourselves? To have erroneous views of the relative parts which the Father and Son performed in the sinner's salvation, brings much misery into the souls of all who entertain them. I venture to say—and I do it with all confidence—that no saint of God who thus in effect, sets the Son above the Father ever enjoyed peace of mind or joy in the Holy Ghost. It could not be in the experience of any one who practically in this way excludes God from the

authorship of eternal salvation to all who believe in Christ. Such an idea is altogether at variance with the entire tenor of the Word of God. There is no length of time which I would not most willingly spend, no amount of effort which I would not most willingly make, with a view to remove the mistaken idea that God the Father is less loving to His saints than Christ Himself is to His disciples.

Let me put the matter in this way. Though all portions of the Word of God are equally true, because equally inspired by the Holy Ghost, I know from the peculiar idiosyncracy of the minds of some of God's saints, that they would prefer to hear anything direct from His own lips than if spoken simply through the medium of any of the writers of the Bible.

When I have made some observations on what God Himself says respecting His tender affection for His saints, and what is said in both books of the Bible on the same subject, I will devote the remainder of this chapter to a consideration of the sayings of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in relation to His heavenly Father.

Now, then, what could more clearly or emphatically show what a loving Father God is towards all His saints than the following utterances from His own lips. In the book of Isaiah

God expresses the ardency of His affection for His people in the following words:—"*Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget them. Behold I have graven them on the palms of My hands. My walls are ever before thee.*" Engraved on the palms of God's hands! Therefore ever present in the sight of God. "My walls are ever before thee." Therefore they are continually under the protection of the Almighty.

Jeremiah has many precious passages expressive of the fervour of God's affection for His people. "I have," God says in the book of that prophet, speaking of His people, "*I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.*" Through the mouth of Jeremiah, God also says to His saints of that prophet's day:—"*The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy, He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with longing.*" These are most remarkable words to come direct from the lips of the Maker and Monarch of the universe. Let any of those who may be led to peruse these pages, only try if they can conceive words more abounding with tender affection, blended with more marvellous condescension, considering that they are addressed

to a class of beings who are not only, in their nature, of a much lower order than the angels in heaven, but by nature and practice alike, rebels against God's Government.

It would not be easy to imagine words more full of tender affection than those which God employs to His saints through the medium of the prophet Ezekiel, when He says:—"*When I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness, yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine.*" Here we have God Himself giving His oath, that His people shall be His. Who that reads these words of God the Father, in relation to the oath He has taken can ever again, if he ever did before, entertain a moment's doubt as to the final perseverance of the saints? Most tender and most touching are the words proceeding direct from the lips of God, expressive of His love for His people, which He spoke through His servant Hosea, to His people, in the time of their captivity. God says, through the medium of that prophet, "*I will betroth thee unto Me for ever. I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness and in judgment, and loving kindness and in mercy.*"

The Old Testament is full of passages of this

kind, expressive of the loving heart of God the Father to His saints. But I will only allude to one more further utterance made to His people under the dispensation which preceded the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a brief utterance of God, but what a world of meaning and affection there is in it! It will be found in the eighth verse of the eighth chapter of the prophecies of Zechariah:—"*They shall be My people, and I will be their God in truth and righteousness.*" The full import of these words can never be conceived,—not even when countless ages of eternity itself have passed away; for the meaning of the terms is infinite. The same words from the lips of God are to be found in other portions of the Old Testament Scripture, but I cite them here because the following verse is to be met with in a previous chapter of the same book:—"For thus saith the Lord of hosts, 'After the glory hath He sent Me into the nations which spoiled you; *for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye.*"

I pause here, after transferring these words to my pages, which I put *in italics*, as the only way in which I can impart to them the greatest emphasis which the forms of printing will admit. How inexpressibly dear they ought to be to every saint of God! In many Christian *houses* I meet with precious texts of Scrip-

ture affixed to the walls. Surely, this text ought to have a place among the number. "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of His eye!" The more one meditates on the words, the greater does their blessedness appear.

Thus far I have cited portions only of the Old Testament, which prove the name and nature of God to be love. Were I to quote passages to the same effect from the New Testament, I could fill pages of my little work. Two or three must suffice. John presents us with the character of God in three short words, each consisting of one syllable. "God is Love," are John's words. Millions of volumes written on the subject could not better describe the character of God than these three monosylables. Paul was utterly lost when he sought to measure the heights and fathom the depths of the love of God to a lost world, and gave utterance to his emotion in language as full of wonder and rapture, as ever proceded from the pen of man.

But, regarding, as every believer in Christ must do, the crowning proof of the love of God to our ruined race, as being furnished by His giving His Son unto death for us, there is one short expression in relation to that great fact,—the greatest fact that ever has occurred or ever can occur in the boundless universe of God. The words to which I refer, are:—"God so

loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but might have everlasting life." There is not a shorter word in the Bible than the word *so*, as here used; but there is not one which has so great a width, or breadth, or depth of meaning, from beginning to the end of that blessed Book. Were I to quote all the texts in the Epistles of the Apostles, enunciating the love of God the Father to His people, no one could be said to convey a better idea of the greatness of that love, than is furnished by Paul in the eighth chapter of His epistle to the Romans. "I am persuaded," he there says, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." No wonder, with such a persuasion, ever present to his mind, that Paul could joy and rejoice in all his tribulations. Many of my readers, I doubt not, will have read the anecdote in relation to the ancient Greek philosopher who, when asked to define what God was, requested a day to consider the question. On the following day, when asked for his answer, he requested two days more, and at their termination, again asked for double the time. He asked

for four days, and continued to double each period of time, alleging as the reason that the more he meditated on the subject, the more he felt lost in its vastness. It would be the same were anyone to apply himself to the consideration of the full import of the litle word "so," in relation to the greatness of the love of God to a lost world. It is, and ever will be, as much beyond the reach of finite comprehension as the being of God Himself. Even the highest archangel has no adequate knowledge of it, nor ever will. It is known only to God Himself. It is an unspeakable gift. The greatness of that gift and the consequent greatness of the love of the Father in giving it, will not only be unspeakable, but inconceivable, after innumerable ages of eternity have passed away. Is it not then marvellous that the thoughts of God, entertained by some of His people, but which I am earnestly labouring to remove, should ever have found an entrance into their minds!

In the fondly-cherished hope that what I have said with a view to divest the mind of believers in Christ of any distrust they may have in the affection of God the Father for them, I have thus called especial attention to God's own words on the subject, and to what is said on it by the writers of the Old Testament and those of the New.

I now come to a consideration of what the Lord Jesus Christ, God's own Son, says in relation to His heavenly Father, in the hope that His words may deepen the impression. The love of every true disciple of Christ to our Lord, is so great that words coming from His lips, known to be emanations from His loving heart, are clothed with a greater attraction, and exercise a greater influence, than if they came from any other source, though entirely trustworthy. In general terms, every word which our Lord, when on earth, spoke in relation to His Father, proved the perfect identity of the Father and the Son, so far as regarded the redemption of a ruined race. And it will most clearly be seen in all the utterances of Christ respecting God, that He spoke of His Father, as regarding His people with the same affection as Jesus Himself did His disciples. First of all,—it would not be easy to conceive words which could more entirely identify God with Christ in the matter of man's salvation, than those which our Lord often employs when addressing His disciples. In the fortieth verse of the tenth chapter of the Gospel by Matthew He says,—"He that receiveth you, receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me, receiveth Him that sent Me." One wonders that any reader *of these* words of our Lord, could for a moment doubt that there could be less affection on

the part of God the Father to His saints, than there is in the heart of God the Son. In the succeeding chapter of the same Gospel by Matthew, we read this prayer of our Lord to His heavenly Father, "I thank thee, O, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." That God the Father was the revealer of all things of an essential kind, pertaining to the salvation of sinners, is here made clear. Still referring to the Gospel by Matthew, we find, in the seventeenth verse of the sixteenth chapter our Lord saying to Simon Peter, in response to what the latter had expressed as his opinion of our Lord's divinity:—"Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven."

In the Gospels by Mark and Luke there are several passages which clearly prove how deep and abiding was our Saviour's sense of the overflowing love which His heavenly Father felt for those whom He came to save. He spoke, indeed, through large portions of John's Gospel of Himself, as being sent by God in our nature into the world, in the capacity of a servant, to do the will of His Father,—which will was to save sinners. In the seventeenth verse of the

fifth chapter of that Gospel our Lord says, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." This is a clear intimation that up to this period of Christ's public ministry, God the Father had been a co-worker with His Son in carrying on and carrying out the great work of man's redemption. In the nineteenth and twentieth verses of the same chapter, our Saviour adds, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do, for what things soever He doeth that also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son and showeth Him all things." So that God not only concurred in all that Christ did, when in this world, in the character of our Redeemer, but acted in the capacity of a director or superintendent of our Lord's substitutionary work. In the thirtieth verse of this same chapter of the Gospel by John, we hear Jesus saying, "I can of my own Self do nothing. As I hear, I judge, and My judgment is just, because *I seek not Mine own will, but the will of My Father Who hath sent me.*" These are remarkable words. They ought to be indelibly written in the mind and heart of every believer in Christ who may be troubled with the groundless notion which I am seeking to remove. Christ the Son here represents Himself as an Agent in carrying out the merciful *and loving* purposes of His heavenly Father.

These are equally one with our Lord's own purposes, not those of an evangelist or apostle only. Both these classes of servants of God employ, in many parts of their writings, words precisely to the same effect. "It is," says one apostle, addressing Christians, "God that worketh in you to will and do of His good pleasure, and the work of faith with power." As I have before said, "Sinners are never made willing to be saved until they are so in the day of God's power. And when converted, it is by the power of God that they are kept through faith unto salvation.

No one can read the words which our Lord spoke in relation to His Father, without being struck with the fact, that He invariably sought to impress on the minds of those to whom He addressed Himself, that God was in every respect a co-Worker with Himself, in carrying on and carrying out the sinner's salvation. No one could have doubted this, had our Lord only spoken, during His public ministry, the following words :—"For I have not spoken of Myself, but the Father which sent Me. He gave Me a commandment what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting. Whatsoever I speak, therefore, *even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak.*"

It were easy to cite many more words of our Lord and Saviour, in which He delighted to

impress on all who listened to His words, the fact that His Father felt as great an affection for believers in His name, as He did Himself, and that God the Father took as great an interest in the sinner's salvation as Christ Himself. It has often been the source of great grief to my own mind, that any sinner saved by grace, should, after being so saved, do such dishonour and injustice to the First Person of the Trinity, as to view Him as having a less loving heart than Christ Himself. Those who so think and feel in relation to God the Father, most grievously err, not knowing the Scriptures. There was not a loving word which our Lord spake when on earth which was not equally spoken by God the Father. There was not a benevolent act which our Lord performed while here below, which was not equally the act of a tender-hearted God and Father in Christ. The great object which Christ was sent into the world to accomplish, was to unfold the loving heart of God the Father in connection with the redemption of mankind from the consequences of their sin. Christ was simply the manifester of God. All His words were as much those of His Father as His own. Every thing He did, was, I repeat, equally the act of His Father as of Himself. It is a grievous sin, and a *source* of great misery to any one who is

guilty of it, to separate God the Father from God the Son, in relation to anything which concerns the salvation of the sinner, or the comfort, or growth in grace, of the believer in the Lord Jesus. How any one who loves the truth could ever have come to the conclusion, that there is more tenderness in the heart of the Son towards those who believe in Him, than there is in the heart of God the Father, is one of those mysteries which can only be explained by what the Scriptures so explicitly and emphatically say regarding the deceitfulness of sin, and its blinding nature in whatever relates to spiritual things. To all those readers of this work to whom these observations apply, and for whose benefit and comfort they have been written, I would, as my parting words, say, "God is reconciled to you; be ye reconciled to God through the death of His Son." Until then you will never know what true happiness is. When you are thus reconciled to God you will immediately become possessors of supreme peace of mind and joy in the Holy Ghost. Instead of seeing a frown on the face of God you will discern on it a perpetual smile.

I might have multiplied citations from the sayings of the Saviour in relation to His love to and adoration of God His Father, as illustrative of the Father's love to believers in Jesus; but I

feel assured that it is not necessary I should do so. If what I have written thus far is prayerfully perused by my readers, and afterwards pondered on their knees, I feel a profound and pleasing conviction, that such of them as have been deeply distressed in their minds by the mistaken views of God to which I have referred, will be delivered from the bondage into which such mistaken views have brought them. God the Father not only was the author of man's redemption, speaking in a general sense, but He is the author of every individual sinner's salvation. Every saved saint will have, through all eternity, to ascribe his regeneration to God. To be born of God is the first step in the sinner's salvation. It is in the day of God's power that he is first made willing to be saved. He no less owes his perseverance in grace to God. He is kept by the power of God through faith into salvation. Oh, how unreasonable, how ungracious, how ungrateful then that any of God's people, when their salvation is from first to last of God, should thus entertain such hard thoughts of Him, as those to which I have been adverting! God, as I have previously said, is grievously dishonoured by such groundless thoughts of Him. What an inexpressible mercy that His thoughts, any more than His ways, *are not* as our thoughts. He is, neither on any

occasion, nor under any circumstances, an angry God to His people. He is, on the contrary, a reconciled God and Father to every believer in Christ. He may, and does, chastise his erring saints, but never in His displeasure. It is not for His pleasure, but for their profit, that He does so. His saints are never more dear to Him than when, because of His providential discipline, He hides for a season His face from them. And so it will be in relation to God's affection for his people till the last hour of their lives; and even in the article of death; for precious, we are told, in His sight, is the death of His saints.

I feel, for various reasons, very deeply on the painful error into which so many of God's people have fallen,—that He has not the same affection for them as the Lord Jesus Christ has, and that, consequently, they cannot feel the same affection for God the Father as they do for Christ the Son. No believer in Christ can ever, as I have before remarked, enjoy real peace while in this state of mind. The Gospel plan is that no one can love the Saviour too much, but it is altogether at variance with the Gospel that Christ should, in any sense, be viewed as if above God. The believer falls into a serious error if he rests in Jesus alone or chiefly. No one is in a right condition of mind who does

not clearly discern the great truth which pervades the New Testament from beginning to end,—that believers are to rest in God the Father alone. Christ is only the way to God. "I am the way; No one cometh to the Father but by Me," are His own words. These are words of our Lord which clearly imply that no disciple of His is to stop short until he has reached, not only the throne, but even the very bosom of God the Father, in which, and there alone, true rest is to be found,—a rest which will even here on earth, prove a prelibation of the rest which remaineth for the people of God in all its fulness, in that brighter and better world to which every believer in Jesus is on his way.

Should I learn, hereafter, that this small work has been the means of correcting, even in a single case, the fearful error with which I have, in my later pages specially sought to deal, and thereby brought peace to his troubled mind, I shall feel in the fact an ample recompense for the time and thought which I have expended in preparing my little Volume for publication.

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